



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

RIGHT TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE

I KNOW WHY I AM HERE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

2020 CONTEXT - COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

In early 2020, all aspects of life were turned on their head as the Covid-19 pandemic swept through the world. Like many other organisations, we saw rapid changes to the way in which we work - with travel, conferences, office working and face to face meetings all hastily abandoned in favour of stay-at-home digital communications. Whilst this affected our usual activities, the advent of online tools meant that in some ways we were more interconnected than ever, and global events from individual living rooms became the norm.

Yet the aftershocks of the pandemic extend far beyond changes to working practices. Covid-19 has had a seismic impact on education systems globally. Schools for more than 168 million children have been permanently closed since March 2020 - and globally, an estimated 112 billion days of education have been lost. The impact of school closures has been felt disproportionately by the most disadvantaged communities, with some of the world's poorest children entirely cut off from their education. Despite the herculean efforts of teachers, parents and caregivers, existing inequalities have been exacerbated beyond measure by the pandemic, and the fragility of entire educational systems has been revealed.

And as pharmaceutical advances signal a tentative end to the worst ravages of Covid 19 globally, the impact on education systems and on the right to education for millions of children globally has yet to be fully established.

As 2020 drew to a close at the Right to Education Initiative, it was clear to us that while the pandemic has thrown global inequalities into sharper focus, it has also reinforced the importance of the right to education and the need to address the injustices which the pandemic has intensified. We met the close of the year with renewed determination to make the right to education a reality for all, while reflecting on the achievements that were possible even in the face of such unprecedented adversity.

Before detailing the milestones of 2020, we wish to thank our donors, supporters and partners for their continued support of the right to education globally. It is through your contributions that the right to education in all of its dimensions can be made a reality.



**DELPHINE DORSI,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



WHO WE ARE

The Right to Education Initiative (RTE) is an international human rights organisation focusing on the right to education. We promote education as a human right, striving for a world where everyone, without discrimination of any kind, can fully enjoy the right to education in all its dimensions.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

We stand for the full recognition of education as a human right, essential for the wellbeing and development of every individual, regardless of their status and circumstance over their life course. This commitment is underpinned by the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence. We recognise that education is key for the realisation of other rights and for building societies where respect for human rights, tolerance, inclusivity and diversity are valued.

WHAT WE DO

We advocate for states to both legally commit to and implement the right to education - to make it a reality for all. In so doing we also seek to ensure that governments are held accountable for meeting their human rights obligations.

RTE builds bridges between diverse fields (human rights, education and development), stakeholders, (including civil society organisations, international organisations, academics, and states) and diverse language communities (including English, French, Spanish and Arabic). We link global, national and local research and evidence based policy dialogue to campaigning and advocacy with the aim of accelerating progress towards the realization of the right to education for all through positive and concrete changes on the ground.

WHY WE EXIST

- To protect and promote the right to education globally
- Because there is continued lack of enjoyment of and violation of the right to education
- To keep education as a human right in the foreground and to reframe education issues as human rights issues
- To make human rights language accessible to right-to-education advocates and to provide tools and materials to accelerate the implementation of this right
- Because there is a need for rigorous evidence-based analysis of current education issues using human rights theory and practice to support advocacy and accountability

2020: WHERE WE WORKED



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our achievements in 2020 would not have been possible without the support of our donors and partners. With your continued support, we can achieve a world in which the right to education becomes a reality from early childhood to adulthood and throughout life, and where all human rights in and through education are realised.

LOOKING FORWARD

Our strategic areas of focus

Over the course of 2020, we developed our 2020-22 strategic plan - consolidating our vision, mission and the changes we want to see occur in the coming years. It defines four key areas of focus for the two-year period, but phases activity to place an emphasis on the following three areas for 2020:

- Focus one: Privatisation of education and the role of private actors - driving state accountability for inclusive, free, quality public education
- Focus two: Early Childhood Care and Education - mobilising for the right to free, compulsory pre-primary education for all
- Focus three: The right to education of migrants - advocating for the right to education of all individuals, irrespective of nationality or legal status

The promotion and implementation of the Abidjan Principles, a reference text on the right to education adopted in 2019 by a group of international experts following a three-year participatory consultation period, continues to be a primary feature of our work.

RTE sits on the Secretariat of the Abidjan Principles, and is instrumental in disseminating information, providing guidance and assisting civil society and national and international entities in their implementation.



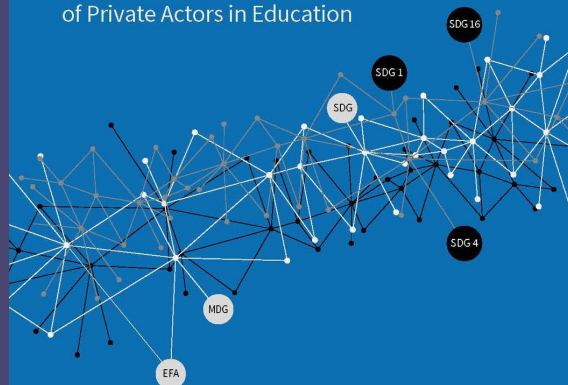
In 2020, we celebrated the first anniversary of the Principles; began editing a book interrogating the most important topics and contentious debates from the adoption processes in both the legal and education spheres; commenced an innovative collaboration with UNESCO-IIEP and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to develop a methodological framework to review national education strategic plans and ensure they reflect States' international commitments for the implementation of the right to education; organised and participated in numerous conferences, webinars, trainings and events; and drafted books, articles, joint submissions and papers in collaboration with a range of partners.

Edited by
Frank Adamson
Sylvain Aubry
Mireille de Koning
Delphine Dorsi



Realizing the Abidjan Principles on the Right to Education

Human Rights, Public Education, and the Role of Private Actors in Education



NORRAG

Series on International Education and Development



salima namusobya @Salima_SN · Feb 13

Today marks a year since the adoption of the [#AbidjanPrinciples](#) on the right to education. Amazing to see all the national, regional & international recognition the principles have had in 1 year. [abidjanprinciples.org/en/support/off...](#) @ISERUganda @GIESCR @RTEInitiative @EELawcentre @amnesty



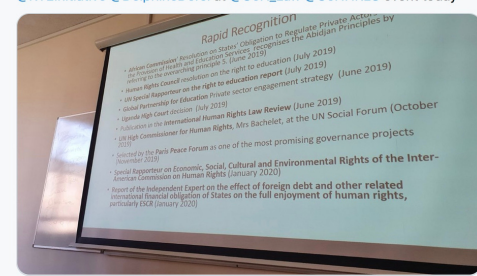
Aoife Nolan @commentator01 · Feb 6

THE ABIDJAN PRINCIPLES: A PRACTICAL TOOL TO ADDRESS GLOBAL EDUCATION CHALLENGES

When: 8:30 - 10:00 PDT
11:30 - 13:00 EST
17:30 - 19:00 CET
18:30 - 20:00 EAT
21:15 - 22:45 NPT

[Join here:](#)

The unstoppable progress of the [#AbidjanPrinciples](#)! Info from @RTEInitiative @DelphineDorsi at @UoN_Law @UoNHRLC event today



Major advances were seen in the recognition of the Abidjan Principles by regional and international human rights organisations, as well as strides forward in their practical use in advocacy and rights protection efforts.

The success of the Abidjan Principles in 2020 is both testament to the strength of this reference document and the carefully conducted, inclusive and participatory process that led to its adoption, and the concerted and ongoing outreach and advocacy conducted by the secretariat, drafting committee and advisors.

THE ABIDJAN PRINCIPLES IN NUMBERS: 2020

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

- RTE HELD AND PARTICIPATED IN **12** DIVERSE EVENTS TO PROMOTE AND EXPLAIN THE ABIDJAN PRINCIPLES
- CO-EDITED **ONE** BOOK
- CO DRAFTED **TWO** PAPERS
- TOOK PART IN **TWO** JOINT SUBMISSIONS TO UN TREATY BODIES
- ABIDJAN PRINCIPLES APPEARED IN **SEVEN** MEDIA OUTLETS

IMPACT

OVERALL, THE ABIDJAN PRINCIPLES HAVE SECURED RECOGNITION BY **10** REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES AND ORGANISATIONS

THE ABIDJAN PRINCIPLES HAVE BEEN USED IN NATIONAL CONTEXTS TO PROMOTE RIGHTS

In line with our overarching strategy, we commenced an ambitious programme of work on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in 2020. We began working on the [Global Partnership Strategy for Early Childhood Care and Education](#), and in July took part in a [UNESCO webinar on ECCE](#) in the context of Covid-19.

In addition, we participated in technical sessions, collaborated on the drafting of the strategy and are currently working closely with the UNESCO Right to Education Programme on its normative dimensions.



JEREMY BISHOP, UNSPLASH



We also made ECCE a greater focus on our own channels, and in November 2020 published a [new issue page](#) on ECCE from a human rights perspective in both French and English.

Finally, in December in 2020 we successfully recruited an experienced ECCE Programme Manager to expand our strategic goals, reach and impact in this area.

Our continued work on the right to education of migrants in 2020 culminated in the publication of a revised website page on migrants and refugees in both French and English.

This updated content features a range of graphics and visuals in addition to new materials and information.



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A GLOBAL OVERVIEW



**79.5 MILLION
FORCIBLY
DISPLACED
PERSONS**



45.7 Million Internal Displaced Persons (IDP)

4.2 Million Asylum Seekers

26 Million Refugees

3.6 Million Venezuelians abroad

TOP INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT COUNTRIES (conflict and violence)

1. Syrian Arab Republic
2. Colombia
3. Democratic Republic of the Congo
4. Yemen
5. Afghanistan



**Did you know ?
73% of refugees
are hosted in
neighbouring
countries**

TOP REFUGEE HOSTING COUNTRIES

1. Turkey
2. Colombia
3. Pakistan
4. Uganda
5. Germany

EDUCATION AND MIGRATION

**MORE THAN 30
MILLION
FORCIBLY
DISPLACED
PERSONS ARE
SCHOOL-AGED**



There is a lack of data on school enrolment for forcibly displaced persons.

States should implement more data collection, especially for IDP's and undocumented migrants.

We also expanded our research, materials and future framework for work on the right to education of unaccompanied migrants aged over 16, with a literature review, global overview and collaboration with French organisation Solidarité Laïque on advocacy for unaccompanied minors and their access to education.

Additionally, we published addition to two blogs on unaccompanied minors and the right to education in France, and administrative barriers to educational completion for migrants.

Vital to the protection of rights is monitoring work. We work in partnership across a range of issue areas to monitor the implementation of the right to education, collaborating with diverse actors to ensure accountability and the realisation of fundamental rights.

UNINTENDED EXCLUSION: MONITORING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION OF PREGNANT GIRLS IN KENYA

In Kenya, thousands of girls are forced out of school after experiencing sexual violence leading to early and unintended pregnancy. The impact of pregnancy on the right to education in Kenya has been a focus for RTE since 2019, when we partnered with Kenyan human rights organisation [Hakijamii](#).

In March 2020, we published the [multimedia essay 'I really want to go to school'](#), which presents our findings and interviews in textual and visual form, using the right to education monitoring guide as a basis.



It identifies systemic failings in the Kenyan education system, uncovers the barriers to returning to school—including stigmatisation, school fees, and lack of childcare—and recommends actions to ensure girls' human rights are respected.



MONITORING TERRITORIAL INEQUALITIES IN FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION

Place of origin has a significant impact on the right to education in France, and has been the focus of a collaborative investigation and advocacy project with Sciences Po Law School Human Rights Clinic since 2019.

In 2020, we supported students to draft a policy brief on place of origin, access and participation in university education, based on research conducted in the first stage of the project and using our right to education monitoring guide as a framework.

In March, the students presented the brief to a colloquium on Equal Opportunities or Equal Achievement in Higher Education in Montpellier, France.

We facilitated the distribution and advocacy outreach surrounding the updated version of the report and its accompanying policy brief, in addition to supporting the development of articles on territorial inequalities and higher education.



WORKING WITH ESCR-NET TO MONITOR THE USE OF DATA

RTE is a steering committee member of the ESCR-Net monitoring working group. ESCR-Net is an international network connecting over 280 NGOs, social movements and advocates across more than 75 countries to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all. Our primary activity with ESCR-net has been to co-direct the development of a collective position on human rights data, intended to challenge existing narratives and state practice regarding official data - which often falls short when it comes to the realisation of economic and social rights.

In 2020, we consolidated the final draft of the collective position on data principles and presented it in a workshop at RightsCon. In addition, the collective position was used as the basis for an amicus curiae submitted to the Supreme Court of Mexico on the lack of data collection in informal settlements, which helped secure a unanimous ruling from the First Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation in Mexico that the statistics bureau, INEGI, include informal settlements in the official census.

Finally, RTE contributed to ESCR-Net's guide on parallel reporting to advance women's economic and social rights, which itself was based on the Right to education handbook published in January 2019.

EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK: MONITORING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

Children in eastern Ukraine are missing out on their education. For more than six years conflict has raged in the region; at the time of writing 13,000 are dead and a staggering 670,000 children don't have access to safe education.

To shine a light on this persistent and protracted humanitarian and human rights crisis, in 2018 RTE began a pilot project in collaboration with journalists and Ukrainian partners to monitor the impact of the armed conflict on education.

In July 2020, we created the multimedia essay and accompanying [legal factsheet 'Caught in the crossfire: The right to education in eastern Ukraine'](#) - combining the journalists' evidence with a human rights analysis.



© DIEGO IBARRA SÁNCHEZ / RTE

© DIEGO IBARRA SANCHEZ / RTE

This essay attracted attention on multiple platforms, and led to an Open Society Foundations Instagram takeover invitation for multimedia essay photographer and RTE collaborator Diego Ibarra Sanchez, serving to showcase the photographs and highlight our approach to using audiovisual information in human rights monitoring projects.

In addition, the findings of the project were used by Save the Children Ukraine in a joint submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and have strengthened our own ongoing advocacy - prompting us to extend our work in this area. We are currently working on a thematic monitoring guide and series of materials for journalists for publication in 2021.

Core to our mission is the provision of authoritative, accessible and independent sources of information on the right to education. Our website is our backbone; published in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic, it provides an online library of resources, materials and tools to empower frontline actors, civil society, social movements and states to apply the right to education in multiple contexts.

In addition, our social networks, e-bulletin, research, webinars, and participation in events are crucial channels via which we raise awareness of the various dimensions of the right to education, stimulate debates, and highlight emerging and neglected issues.

WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA AND NETWORKS

In 2020 we invested in translations of website content to strengthen our commitment to build bridges between different language communities. Our social channels continued to grow in followers and see an increase in engagement, and our mailing lists expanded.



5656 Followers
2.5% increase on
2019



34 news items in English
14 in French
8 in Spanish



7 blogs in English
3 in French
1 in Spanish



286,162 web users
482,826 page views



11 e-bulletins sent to
695 subscribers, a
3% increase on 2019



537 followers
176 new followers



558 new followers
14% increase on 2019



35% increase in
Spanish speaking
users

PUBLICATIONS AND EVENTS

- Co-hosted and participated in **17** events, workshops, conferences and webinars
- Wrote and contributed to **five** articles and papers
- Co-edited **one** book
- Presented in **French, English** and **Portuguese**

We constantly engage and work in partnership with a diverse range of actors - including academics, researchers, NGOs, the UN community, African Commission and others - to build bridges and collaborate on common goals.

Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium

RTE is an active member of the Privatisation in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHRC). The Consortium is an informal network of national, regional and global organisations and individuals who collaborate to analyse and respond to the challenges posed by the rapid growth of private actors in education from a human rights perspective and propose alternatives.

RTE is part of the facilitation group that supervises the coordinator and takes care of the administrative dimension of the Consortium. We also lead the working group on the Abidjan Principles, in addition to consulting on and reviewing reports. In 2020, we played an active role in the expansion of the network.

Francophone network against the commercialisation of education

Throughout 2020, RTE played an active role in the Francophone Network against the commercialisation of education. This informal network, which encompasses 303 member organisations from 37 countries, aims to ensure a collective mobilisation of the education actors in order to coordinate our responses to the commercialisation of education phenomena in Francophone countries and to propose alternative solutions.

In 2020, we participated in regular network meetings, in addition to conducting ongoing advocacy and research activities in conjunction with the Francophone Network Coordinator, whose position we contributed to the financing of and whose work we supervise. In addition, RTE played a crucial role in supporting the development of a Network of Francophone researchers working on the issue of privatisation in education. Led by University of Geneva researcher Thibaut Lauwerier, the Francophone Network comprises 29 researchers from 13 countries.

Network highlights

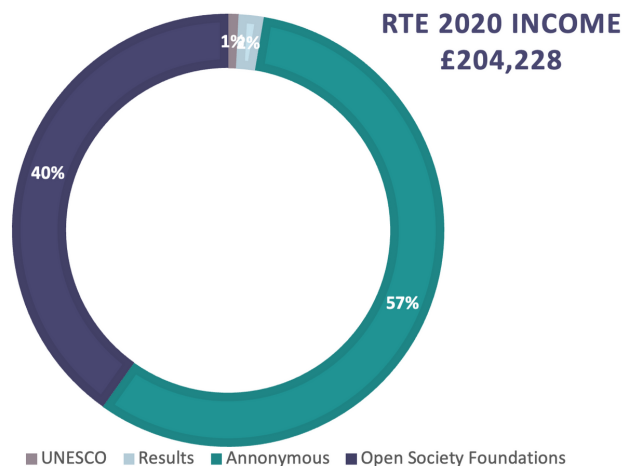
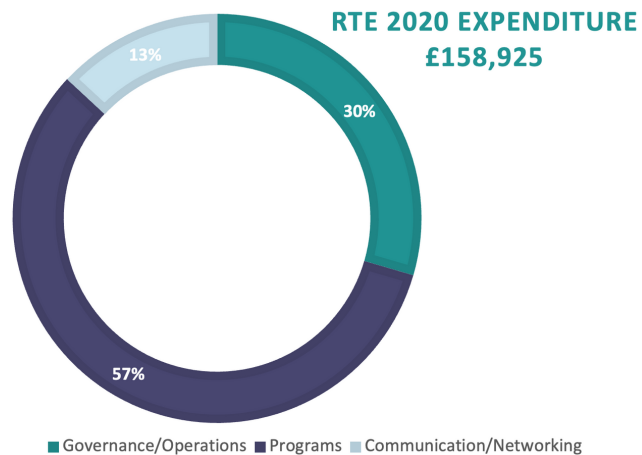
3 online meetings with the Network's members
6 newsletters produced
60 articles and reports shared on the Network's website
2 articles published

International Network of Education in Emergencies (INEE)

RTE is a member of the INEE Advocacy working group. Throughout 2020, we worked in conjunction with partners on the launch of an advocacy brief on non-state actors' involvement in education in emergencies, with reference to the Abidjan Principles. This brief will launch in early 2021.

OUR SUPPORTERS

Our work would not be possible without the generous support of our donors, who enable the right to education to become a reality.



WITH THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING
ORGANISATIONS FOR THEIR IN KIND SUPPORT



OUR TEAM

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:

- David Archer, Head of Civic Participation, Tax Justice and Public Services at ActionAid
- Iain Byrne, Researcher/Advisor - Economic and Social Justice Team, Global Issues Programme Special Advisor, and Strategic Litigation at Amnesty International
- Partnerships at Habitat for Humanity International
- Ayan Hassan, Programme Finance Manager at War Child UK
- Elin Martinez, Senior Researcher in the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch
- Anjela Taneja, Lead Campaigner Inequality / Lead Specialist Essential Services at Oxfam India

Trustees appointed in 2020

- Nikki Skipper, Head of Fundraising at The Queen's Commonwealth Trust
- Dina Hashem, Associate Director for Global
- Bharti Patel, International Child Rights Advocate

Staff

- Delphine Dorsi - Director
- Natalia Dzvelaia - Finance and administrative officer
- Erica Murphy - Project Officer

New additions to the team at the close of 2020

- Eleanor Rosenbach - Communications Manager
- Rajakumari Michaelsamy - Programme Manager, ECCE
- Hoda Awwad - Programme Officer, Private Actors in Education

With special thanks to the consultants and contributors who have supported our work

- Juliana Lima
- Susie Talbot
- Clara Beauvoir
- Laure Fletcher
- Kanto Calange



For more information about our work, see our website

www.right-to-education.org

Follow us on:

