

# Right to Education Initiative 2023-2026 Strategy

Advancing the realisation of the right  
to education in a transforming world





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# Executive summary

**We are the Right to Education Initiative.**  
We are guardians of the right to education.



**Human rights are at the heart**

of who we are and what we do.



**We embrace diversity in our worldview,**

in our composition, and in our methodologies.



**We are an agile, flexible and adaptable organisation,**

with demonstrable and unwavering commitment to the right to education.



**We are rigorously accountable,**

transparent, and committed to learning.



**We believe in collaboration,**

not competition.



**We empower the access of rights.**

We do not offer charity.



‘The Right to Education Initiative, as a global human rights organization focusing on the right to education, is the first non-governmental Organization covering comprehensively the right to education at global level. The work carried out by the Organization, in terms of research, analysis, awareness raising and advocacy constitutes a major reference in this area, and the role this Organization plays is unique. In the field of right to education, very few NGOs have a comparable expertise. The Organization seeks to constantly reinforce the human rights capacities of right to education defenders worldwide, so as to ensure that everyone enjoys the right to education, while strengthening accountability worldwide.’

**Rolla Mounne**

Programme Specialist, Right to Education Programme, UNESCO

## Education is not a privilege. It is a human right.

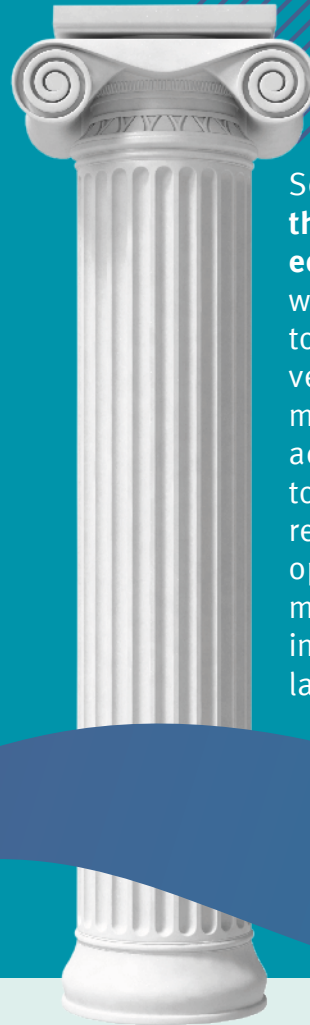
This central tenet of international law is our foundational pillar, and guides our work as a non-governmental international human rights organisation dedicated entirely to the promotion and defence of the right to education.

**Our vision** is a world in which everyone can fully enjoy the right to education in all its dimensions from birth to adulthood and throughout life, regardless of their status and circumstances, and where all human rights in and through education are respected, protected and realised.

## Our work rests on two foundational pillars



Firstly, **we protect and strengthen the international legal, political and institutional frameworks** that uphold the right to education, ensuring a rights-based approach to education is at the heart of debate, documentation and policy at international level. We clarify legal standards, and work to shape them where needed.



Secondly, **we work to build the capacity of a broader ecosystem of actors**, often working behind the scenes to support others' initiatives. We excel in building movements and catalysing action. We are committed to sharing knowledge and resources, to developing open-source tools and materials, and to making international human rights law accessible.

This strategy builds on more than two decades of impact, affecting change at international level by setting and clarifying international legal standards; championing the right to education across multiple sectors; building capacity and galvanising movements; supporting national partners in their interventions; and leading critical thinking on the right to education to bring about legal, political, and social change.

## Context and focus

The risks posed towards the realisation of the right to education are multiple, compounded by rapid changes to the world in which we live. However, this strategy recognises the need to be focused in our efforts, seeking to drive maximum impact in support of civil society actors in the education, human rights and development sectors and in strengthening the international legal, political and institutional frameworks that guarantee the right to education. Over the subsequent three years, we will draw on our extensive expertise in international human rights law and the use of its mechanisms; in our thematic expertise as regards specific dimensions of the right to education; and our global web of contacts, at local, national and international level, and in academia, civil society, and international non-governmental organisations, to dedicate ourselves to the following issue areas:



Advancing early childhood care and education (ECCE) rights, including free pre-primary education



Calling for the protection and implementation of the right to public education and the regulation of non-states actors involved in education



Collaborating with students in monitoring inequalities in access and participation in higher education



Bringing a human rights lens to assess the increased use of technology in education



Influencing legal and policy frameworks in response to the connection between climate change and the right to education, both in terms of impact and solutions

Underpinning this ambitious strategy is a detailed theory of change, a strong team of committed, multilingual and multidisciplinary experts committed to making the right to education a reality, and a history of successful advocacy efforts.

# About us

**We are guardians of the right to education.**

## Who we are

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

## 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.

## The world we want to see

Our vision is a world in which everyone can fully enjoy the right to education in all its dimensions from birth to adulthood and throughout life, regardless of their status and circumstances, and where all human rights in and through education are respected, protected and realised.

## 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.



## Our values



**Human rights at the heart of our work.** Human rights are essential for a dignified life, and their recognition and protection fundamental for a peaceful and inclusive society. Human rights law is a foundational pillar from which we seek to address world challenges, and a powerful tool for lasting change.



**Committed, consistent and reliable.** We dedicate ourselves entirely to the right to education, with passion and unwavering commitment. We are reliable, and committed to supporting others.



**Flexible and adaptable.** We are a small and agile organisation with a global web of connections which allow us to flex to meet different challenges, and catalyse action around pressing and emerging issues.



**Empowering, not offering charity.** Long term change occurs when individuals are enabled to access, defend and protect their rights. We do not believe in offering charity, and instead seek to build capacity and share knowledge and resources, working in partnership with those with different areas of expertise and knowledge.



**Collaboration, not competition.** In a world where resources are scarce and violations of rights are multiple, CSO competition weakens our collective potential for change, and ultimately damages the exercise of rights. Underpinning our approach is a commitment to working in partnerships, and a belief that collective efforts for the right to education are strengthened when organisations and actors from a range of fields come together in a spirit of collaboration, not competition. We believe in sharing knowledge, working together to achieve maximum potential, and combining understanding and resources to enhance the protection and promotion of rights.



**Embracing and seeking diversity.** We believe that a plurality of views, voices and perspectives enriches our work and our understanding. We embrace and seek diversity in the people who conduct our work, in the languages and worldviews we hold, in the engagement with our surroundings, and in the methods we use to achieve change.



**Accountability, transparency, and a commitment to learning.** We are open and transparent about our work, our successes, and our areas for improvement. We are committed to listening, to learning, and to responding to feedback on how to grow and adapt as an organisation.

“

‘Organisations always want to put their logo everywhere, be visible, and RTE have been dismantling that. There are more and more calls to decolonize the global civil society field and have more and more leadership in the global South, in national organisations and it is what RTE has been doing for a while without saying it’

**Sylvain Aubry**

**Human Rights Watch**

“

‘OMEP is honoured to work together and grateful for the intelligence and commitment of all RTE members. They have helped us and continue to help us a lot in our advocacy work for the right to early childhood education. RTE is a powerful and giant organisation in ideas, coherence, humanity and generosity.’

**Mercedes Mayol Lassalle**

**World President, OMEP**



## Our history

The Right to Education Initiative (RTE) was established in 2000 by the first UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski. Originally conceived of as an online repository for information about the right to education, international law and national constitutions and Tomasevski's expert reports, this website grew in content and influence. In 2008, ActionAid, Amnesty International and the Global Campaign for Education decided to honour and continue her work as a collaborative initiative building bridges between their respective fields in development, human rights and education. In 2012, Save the Children and Human Rights Watch joined these organisations to strengthen RTE's strategic direction. In May 2017 RTE became an independent charity, registered in England and Wales (charity number 1173115). In 2021, the organisation was also registered in France (registration number W751261694).



'I knew the amazing Katarina Tomasevski, the first U.N. Special Rapporteur for the Right to Education, very well. She would be extremely proud of the Right to Education Initiative which has carried on and significantly expanded her work. The RTE Initiative is the go-to global organization for all issues concerning the right to education today'.

**Steven J. Klees**

**Professor of International Education Policy, University of Maryland**

## Our legacy

We have proven our commitment and consistency to promoting and defending the right to education for more than 20 years. Much of what we do is in support of others, occurring behind the scenes and in service of a long-term and collaborative view. Some of our impacts and added value are highlighted below:



Photo: UNESCO

### **Framing education as a right and shifting the education and development sector to adopt a human rights based approach.**

We are a go-to international reference point on the right to education, and our open-source information and tools, such as our [monitoring guide](#) and [list of right to education indicators](#), have shaped education monitoring from a human rights perspective across multiple sectors. Additionally, we continue to provide a knowledge hub on the right to education through our multilingual, high traffic [website](#).

## Strengthening legal and policy standards on the right to education.

We have interpreted in a progressive way what the right to education means in practice, and have pushed for stronger global standards where needed. Our signature achievement to date is the role we played in leading the development of the Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education, which have been recognised and used widely since their adoption in 2019.



## Leading critical thinking on the right to education to bring about legal, political and social change.

With deep knowledge and technical expertise on the right to education, we have long provided legal and policy analysis on its various dimensions. In particular, we have focused on emerging or neglected areas such as the privatisation and commercialisation of education and early childhood care and education, making recommendations and advocating for the protection and implementation of the right to education. Our expertise, specialist knowledge, and campaigning acumen has led to collaboration, co-publishing and contribution to the work of key education actors such as UNESCO Right to Education Programme, UNESCO-IIEP, UNESCO GEM Report, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.



## Supporting national partners' efforts to advance the realisation of the right to education on the ground.

We do not seek to carry out our own national-level interventions, rather to bring together complementing areas of expertise. Those embedded in national contexts hold the rich knowledge necessary to intervene, whilst we can offer extensive experience of engaging with international mechanisms to transcend national-level activism to international dimensions. See, for instance, our work with partners in Kenya, Ukraine, France, UK, and Chile.



## Convening and catalysing different actors committed to the right to education.

We have excelled in bringing these actors together, from local to global, building bridges between sectors and enhancing capacity, while catalysing collaborations and action. This is a core feature of our organisation: our commitment to partnership, to opening up our extensive and rich network of contacts to collaboration, and to stimulating joint action, particularly as regards driving specific progressive policy and legal agendas forward.



# The right to education in a transforming world

## Education is not a privilege. It is a human right

‘Everyone has the right to education’- Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This fundamental right, recognised and protected under international law, begins at birth, lasts throughout life, and acts as an enabler whose realisation permits the access to and enjoyment of other human rights. Education is essential for the development and well being of individuals and key to building fair, peaceful and sustainable societies.

States, who are responsible for the implementation of public policies, must do everything possible to provide inclusive free, quality public education to all. In accordance with their human rights obligations, they must guarantee, protect and enforce the right to education in all its dimensions with the adoption of laws, policies and adequate funding, as well as effective political and legal mechanisms to address any gaps or violations.



# The right to education is not yet realised

Despite the centrality of education to the development of individuals and fair, sustainable and peaceful societies, the right to education is not fully realised.

Millions of children, youth and adults still do not have access to education. Foremost to suffer are the most marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged. As an illustration:

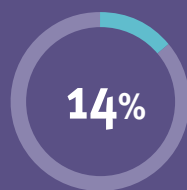


## 1 in 4

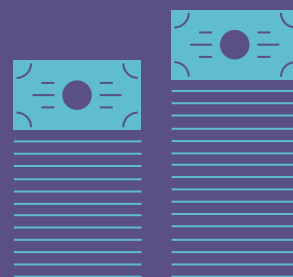
children under five have had no access to pre-primary education, despite the immeasurably positive benefits early childhood care and education offers to children, their families and communities, and education systems themselves.

## 244 million

children aged between 6-18 are out of school



of the global total of this age



US \$

## 100 billion

projected **annual** financing gap



## 1 in 3

adolescent girls from the poorest households have never set foot in a classroom



## 773 million

adults, the majority of whom are women, are illiterate

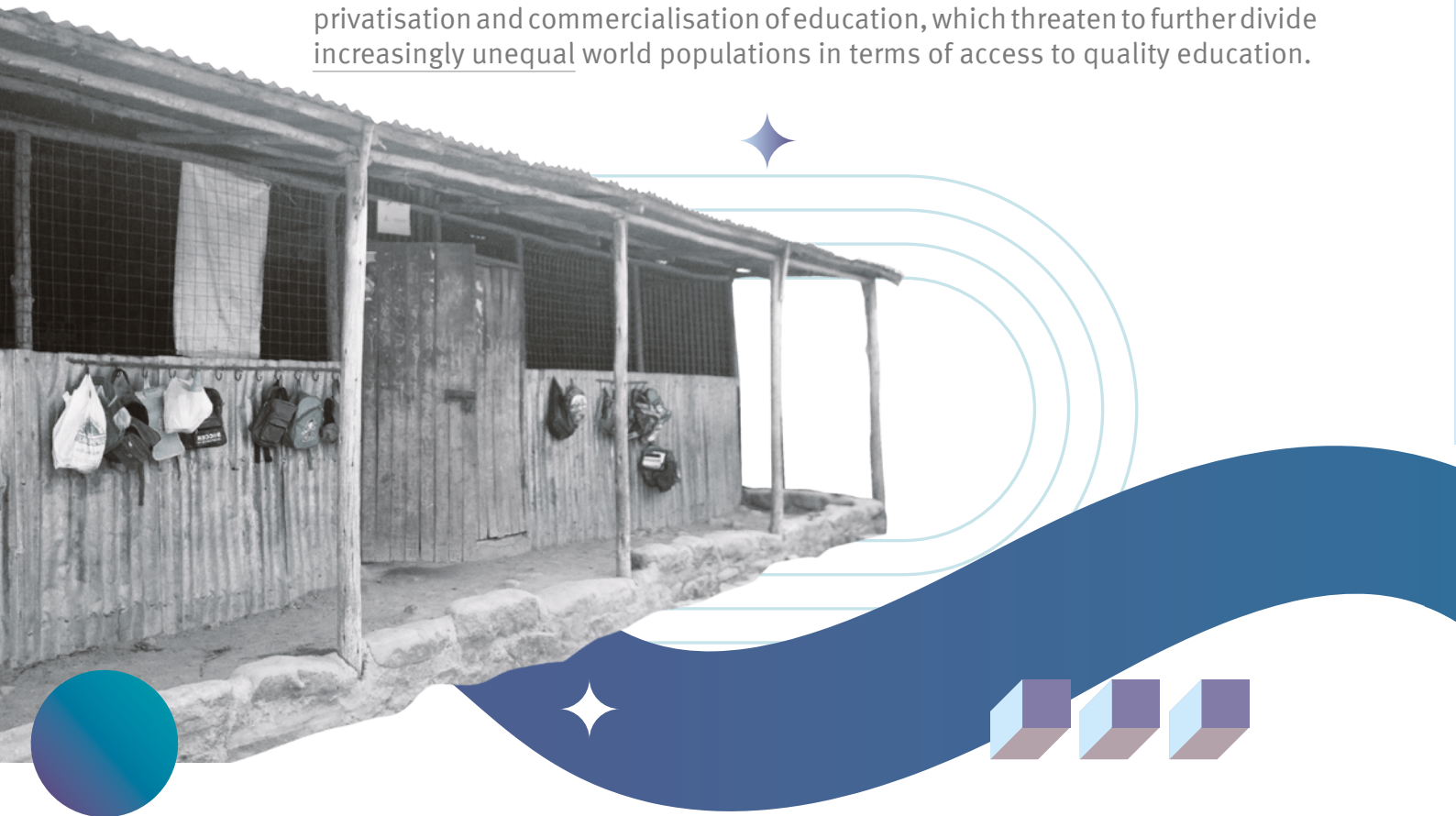


Education is not free. Households account for 30% of total education spending globally.



About 8% of families borrow to pay for education

Millions more children and youth find themselves in school but in receipt of a poor quality education - with families often bearing financial responsibility for their children's schooling, despite states' obligation to provide free, public education. Indeed, collectively states are failing to meet this obligation, with a projected \$100 billion (USD) global annual financing gap as regards SDG4 education targets. The failure to adequately finance public education opens the door to rampant privatisation and commercialisation of education, which threaten to further divide increasingly unequal world populations in terms of access to quality education.



## Education is impacted by a world in crisis and rapid transformation

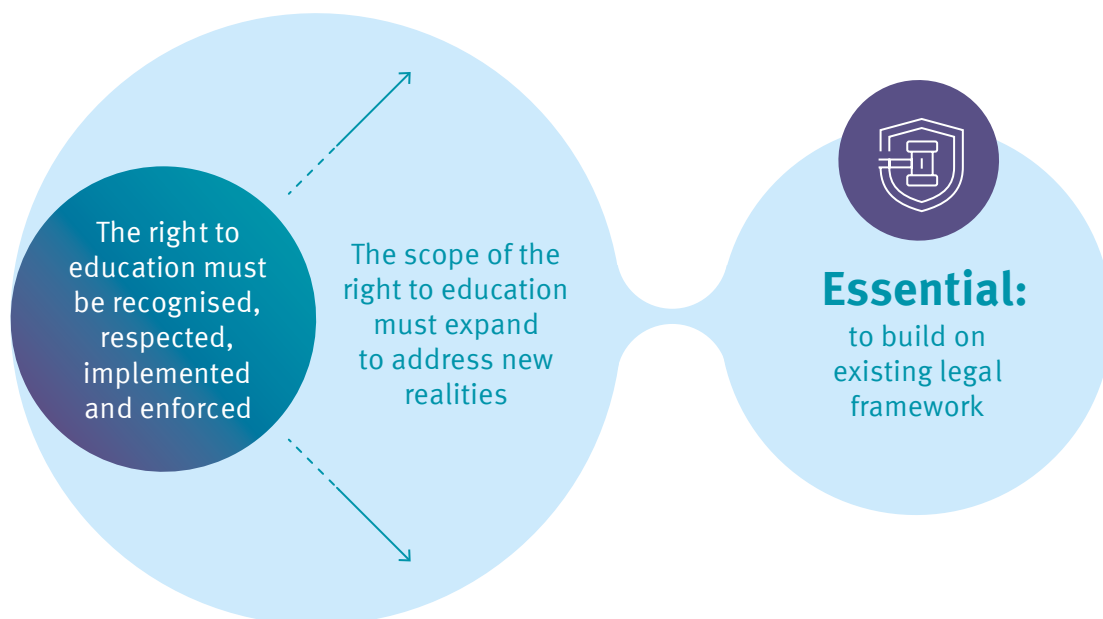
In addition to these challenges, the world faces a plurality of crises: global pandemics, climate change, conflicts, and economic and social crises which aggravate poverty and mass internal and external migration movements. These macro-structural forces both exacerbate existing threats to the enjoyment of the right to education and create new challenges, including the rapid uptake of technology in education, long-term school closures, and the development of distance learning.

## Education systems and their actors are in flux

Education actors include states, inter-governmental and civil society organisations, academics, researchers, donors, and business actors. Their roles and relationships are in transformation. The growing involvement of business actors in education, including at state level and in inter-governmental organisations, is a new phenomena that impacts and transforms education worldwide, while questioning the definition of the public space.



# The right to education is at a pivotal time



While efforts still must be made to recognise, respect, protect and enforce the right to education worldwide, its scope must expand to address new realities. Yet within the complex panorama described above, the hard-fought right to education is today at risk, despite the world-transforming progresses made towards its realisation over the second half of the 20th century. There are regressions on existing commitments, as for instance the unacceptable violation of girls' right to education in Afghanistan. In addition, given the prospect of new negotiations about the scope of the right to education, it will be essential to ensure that any new developments build on the existing legal framework to avoid any retrogression. Progress must never be taken for granted. States' implementation of the right to education must be monitored to identify gaps and violations for targeted advocacy and accountability processes. Equally important is that civil society actors are equipped with the information, tools and skills necessary to advocate for the right to education at both national and international level. Finally, there is a vital and ongoing need for efforts at international level to ensure that the human rights frameworks sets the tone for national implementation in a way which respects the spirit and essence of the right to education.

## Despite these challenges, there is cause for celebration

International experts have coalesced around definitions and understandings of the right to education in the context of the privatisation and commercialisation of education, which have been compiled in the Abidjan Principles. Collective advocacy efforts have led to the cessation of international funding to commercial school chains. A committed movement of global actors from diverse sectors is mobilising to support the right to early childhood education. The language and narratives used in international human rights documents and reports champions the right to education across different dimensions - including around pre-primary education and higher education. These advances are cause for hope, and emphasise the importance of committed actors working in partnership to advance the right to education.

The assessment of this complex context in which the realisation of the right to education must be advanced is the foundation upon which this strategy rests.



# Our Theory of Change

Our ultimate goal

## The world we want to see

A world in which everyone, regardless of their status and circumstances, can fully enjoy the right to education in all its dimensions, from birth to adulthood and throughout life, and where all human rights in and through education are respected, protected and realised.



Our intermediate goals

## What is needed to see this world

- States adopt, implement, and enforce adequate laws and policies to realise the right to education in all its dimensions which:
  - + Are aligned with international human rights standards, including in new or emerging areas
  - + Are adequately budgeted and funded
  - + Protect the public education system and prioritise the right to education of children from the marginalised communities
- States are accountable for their actions or omissions in their jurisdictions and extraterritorially
- Civil society actors - including CSOs, parents, teachers, students, academics - participate in the development of education law and policies at national and international level from a human rights perspective, and have the tools to monitor the realisation of the right to education and hold states accountable

We are an international non-governmental organisation committed to working in partnership with organisations at national level. Our approach reflects our belief that those embedded within national contexts are experts on their environments and the challenges faced, and are therefore best placed to conduct work at country level. Consequently, the primary focus of our efforts is to influence the international human rights framework, in which we have significant experience. We also seek to impact the realisation of the right to education at national level, by supporting national partners to influence changes needed on the ground.

## Objective 1

# The protection and strengthening of the international legal, political and institutional frameworks that guarantee the right to education and guide its implementation at national level



## How we will measure outcomes contributing to this objective:

- International political documents related to education will include human rights references
- International human rights law will expand to cover new dimensions of the right to education
- Any new development of the scope of the right to education will build on existing human rights standards and guarantees
- Inter-governmental organisations' (IGOs) documents and policies will reflect RTE's policy positions and language on the interpretation of the right to education and its new developments
- States will use multilateral systems, such as the UN, to champion the right to education

## Objective 2

**The strengthening of 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.**



### How we will measure outcomes contributing to this objective:

- Civil society actors adopt human rights language and narratives in their work, including recent interpretations developed by human rights experts
- Civil society actors carry out evidence-based monitoring of education using a rights-based approach
- Civil society actors report to national and international human rights mechanisms
- Various civil society actors mutualise their efforts, working together and supporting each other



## Our activities

# What we will do to reach our objectives



## Inform

in an accessible way about the international legal and policy frameworks relating to the right to education, including through our multilingual website.



## Advocate

for states to both legally commit to and implement the right to education, either domestically or extraterritorially, including as members of intergovernmental organisations. In so doing we also seek to ensure that governments are held accountable for meeting their human rights obligations.



## Research

by unpacking and clarifying the international legal and policy framework related to the right to education and providing legal analysis on specific issues, including on new dimensions of the right to education.



## Provide technical support

to civil society actors to use human rights law and mechanisms as a tool to strengthen their research and advocacy work; and to states and intergovernmental organisations to adequately implement the right to education.



## Build bridges

between different fields (human rights, education and development); actors (CSOs, intergovernmental organisations, academics, states); and language communities (English, French, Spanish and Arabic) to catalyse actions and enable diverse actors to work together to achieve meaningful changes at national and international level to advance the realisation of the right to education.



## Collaborate

by engaging in various networks, in education and across adjacent fields, and by cultivating relationships and partnerships with key education actors such as UNESCO and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education.



## Raise awareness

about violations of the right to education and gaps in its implementation.

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‘Over the years we have used RTE has our to go for international law, research and comparative law research and you have been very kind to us in promoting our work as well and I very appreciate that.’

**Faranaaz Veriava**

**Head of Education, Section 27,  
South African public interest  
law firm**

# Where we will be directing our efforts in the coming years

This strategy seeks to consolidate our successes over recent years, while looking toward the most critical and emerging challenges as regards the right to education.

## Our strategic approach:



**In terms of content:** we will continue to focus our research and advocacy on specific dimensions of the right to education, as described below, while engaging in the debate and development of the expansion of the scope of the right to education led by UNESCO.



**In terms of function:** we will enhance our role as thought leaders on the right to education, and increase our support to the actors engaged in advancing the realisation of the right to education through technical assistance and capacity building. We will explore new economic models to sustain these functions.



**In terms of target:** we will continue to collaborate closely with civil society actors as our primary audience, with a particular attention to young people.

## Criteria for the choice of our thematic areas

We are committed to advancing the realisation of the right to education in all its dimensions, and are available to provide advisory services, technical support, and guidance to partners across any aspect needed. Equally, we recognise the need to be focused in our own work, and select areas of focus in accordance with the following criteria:

Emerging and critical areas for the protection and defence of the right to education

Areas in which the legal framework and/or human rights require developing and strengthening

Scale and urgency of the issue in terms of the realisation of the right to education

Extent to which existing monitoring from a human rights perspective occurs at grassroots level



**Using these criteria, we have chosen to focus our efforts over the coming years on the following areas:**

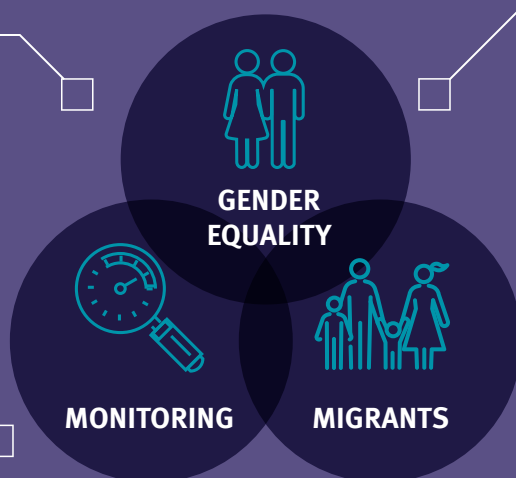
Advancing **early childhood care and education (ECCE)** rights, including free pre-primary education

Calling for the protection and implementation of the right to **public education** and the **regulation of non-state actors** involved in education

Collaborating with students in monitoring inequalities in access to and participation in **higher education**

Bringing a human rights lens to assess the increased use of **technology in education**

Influencing legal and policy frameworks in response to the connection between **climate change and the right to education**, both in terms of impact and solutions



We have been working on the first three issues (ECCE, public education and non-state actors and higher education) over recent years. The subsequent two (technology in education, and climate change) are new areas of work.

It is important to stress that these areas are interrelated, and we seek to draw linkages between them. For instance, our work on ECCE and higher education will include the issue of privatisation and commercialisation; the use of technology in education; and climate change. In addition, these areas are intersected by and will necessitate a focus on other key dimensions of the right to education, such as access, quality and financing. **Gender equality will be mainstreamed across all our work.**

Across all of these focus areas **we will pay particular attention to migrants.** Multiple world crises are prompting ever greater numbers of children and youth to move outside the borders of their home countries - with immense impacts on their right to education. We have begun research on undocumented migrants aged 16 or above, and will expand this work in the coming years.

**Monitoring the right to education will continue to be at the heart of our work.** We will continue to develop thematic monitoring guides, and will provide training and technical support to use them.

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‘RTE has an amazing track record of serving as a small, powerful targeted catalyst, building a new narrative and concretely anchoring a human rights view of education’. Its ability to clarify, interpret and apply national and international law in support of the right to education is unparalleled. RTE is an essential and unique component of the human rights landscape.’

**Michael Gibbons**

Scholar in Residence,  
International Training and  
Education Program (ITEP),  
American University

## Building on our existing work

The following three areas consolidate our legacy over recent years, and drive forward the changes we have set in motion on the issues of early childhood care and education, higher education, and non-state actors' involvement in education. Over the coming three years, we will build on what we have achieved so far by deepening our efforts and expanding our work and collaboration with partners. Our consistency on these areas is particularly important given the time required to implement legislative and policy changes both in international and national arenas. Below we outline the reasons why we will keep on working on these areas, the changes we want to see, and what we plan to do in the coming years, while recalling our impacts to date.

### Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

#### Why we are working on this area

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) lays the foundations for the enjoyment of the lifelong right to education. It is central to healthy cognitive, physical and social development, and builds resilience in children and their wider communities. It is also a powerful equaliser that can improve education outcomes for the most disadvantaged children, in the process making systems more equitable and improving functioning.

Despite this potential **some 35 million of the world's 137 million under-fives** have not had any pre-primary education.

Furthermore, rampant privatisation and commercialisation coupled with limited regulation of private actors further exacerbates inequalities to the detriment of the most vulnerable, marginalised, and disadvantaged.

Finally, despite this context and evident need, global levels of legal, political and financial commitment to ECCE are inadequate, with 40% of countries allocating just 2% of total education budgets to this crucial educational and development stage. This further intensifies inequalities in the access to and quality of ECCE, with the most disadvantaged children worst impacted.

#### What we want to see

- ECCE rights, including free pre-primary education, legally recognised, protected, implemented and enforced
- Free and inclusive quality ECCE accessible to all



## What we will do

- Provide analysis and clarify international human rights law and other policy frameworks on ECCE rights
- Influence and contribute to the development of the international human rights framework to recognise more clearly and explicitly early childhood care and education rights, including specifically a right to at least one-year free, quality pre-primary education
- Advocate for better implementation of ECCE rights and seek accountability by supporting education activists with tools, training and technical assistance for monitoring ECCE from a human rights perspective

## Our impact to date

- **Influencing intergovernmental organisations to advocate for strengthening the international legal framework on ECCE:** We played a pivotal role in securing the inclusion of concerns related to legal frameworks within the programmatic agenda of UNESCO. Key outcomes include:
  1. Inclusion of a normative framework as one of the five goals in the UNESCO Global Partnership Strategy for early childhood
  2. Facilitation of collective drafting process for the UNESCO thematic report on the strengthening of the international legal framework, which we co-authored
  3. Co-organisation of a parallel event at the second World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE) on building and strengthening the legal framework on ECCE rights, together with UNESCO and other civil society organisations. This event was instrumental for securing references in the Tashkent Declaration on the need for strong legal and policy frameworks both at national and international level
- **Advocating for the UN Special Rapporteur to advance ECCE as a core issue:** we consistently work with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, including through public engagement, official submissions, regular inputs and expert contributions to inform her reports to the Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly. We provided inputs to reports on migration and ECCE and the full report on ECCE
- **Building a global alliance for joint advocacy:** We have established and continue to facilitate a Global Advocacy Working Group, bringing together CSOs, academics, UNESCO and the office of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education to jointly advocate for the strengthening of the international legal framework on ECCE







## Higher Education

### Why we are working on this area

Higher education is too often disassociated from the right to education.

There are unacceptable discriminations and huge inequalities in higher education that perpetuate inequalities in society (in the job market and positions of power).

The privatisation and commercialisation of higher education and students' debt are major issues.

Academic freedom and quality higher education are at risk, yet remain essential for a healthy and sustainable society.

### What we want to see

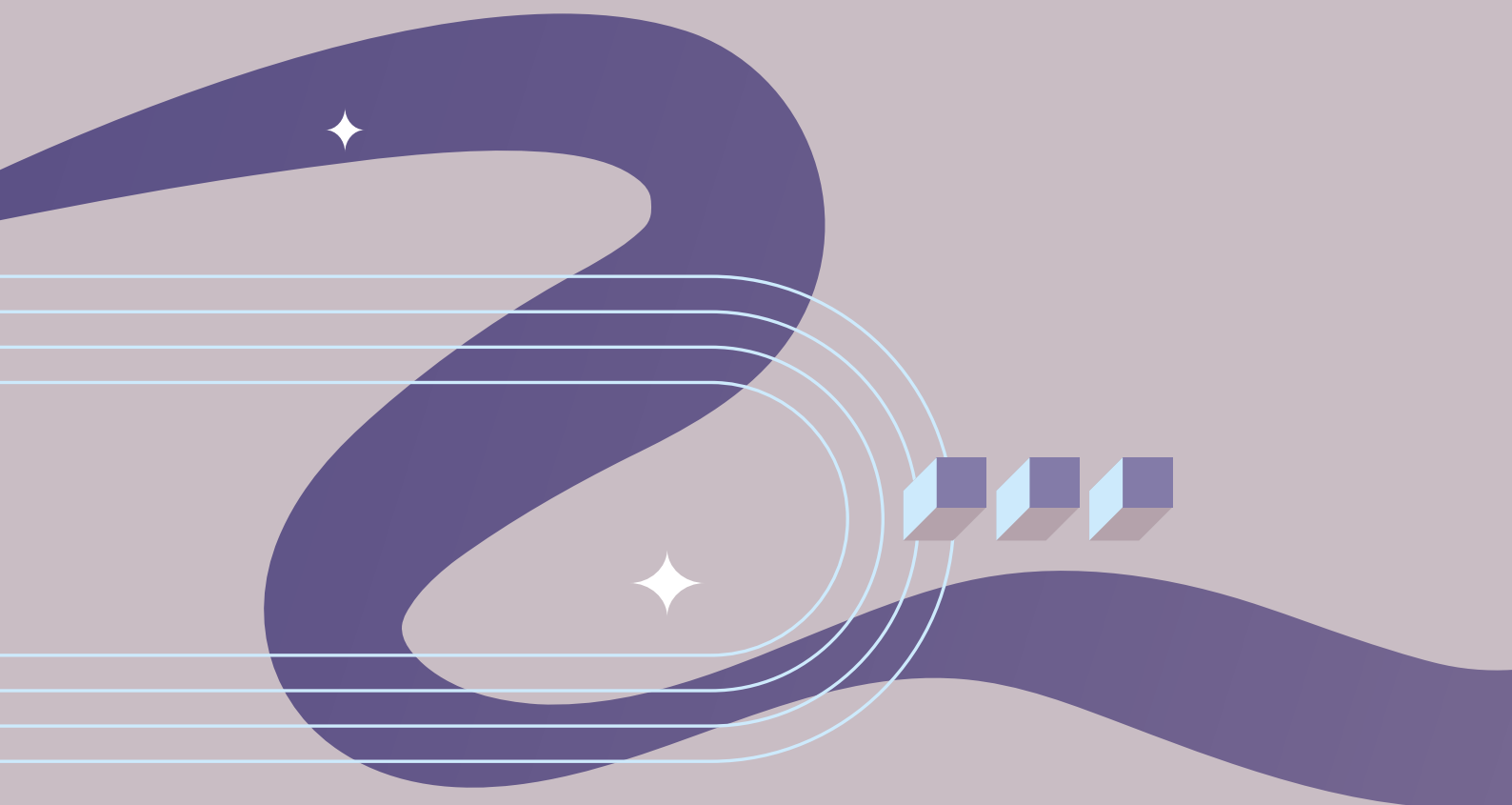
- **The right to higher education legally recognised, protected, implemented and enforced**
- **Free and inclusive quality higher education**
- **The protection of academic freedom**

### What we will do

- **Bring attention to and denounce** the persisting inequalities in higher education
- **Advocate** for the realisation of the right to higher education, particularly the financing of free higher education, prioritising the most disadvantaged students
- **Work with policy makers at international level to ensure that the right to education is at the centre of any higher education policies**
- **Provide workshops and technical support to partners in monitoring and reporting on the realisation of the right to higher education**, particularly as regards inequalities and cost
- **Engage with students**, bringing them knowledge and tools to use human rights law and mechanisms to strengthen their advocacy

## Our impact to date

- We have clarified the international legal framework relating to higher education, notably through co-authoring a policy paper with UNESCO, entitled 'Right to Higher Education: Unpacking the international normative framework in light of current trends and challenges'.
- Additionally, in recognition of our specific ability to ensure that a human rights perspective is at the centre of discussions on education, we have successfully brought a rights-based approach to discussions of higher education at multiple events and fora, including through a panel discussion we led at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education, and the facilitation of multilingual discussions with academics and CSOs on privatisation of higher education from a human rights perspective.
- For five years we have worked on a prize winning initiative with youth groups to enhance their capacity to monitor and document violations of the right to higher education. The purpose of this project was also to raise awareness and develop tools and research on specific issues relating to the right to higher education in France, including inequalities, place of origin, and the impact of Covid-19 on higher education.
- In recognition of the impact of our open-source monitoring tools to date in facilitating the exercise of monitoring and reporting among non-legal experts, we have developed a guide to support the monitoring of inequalities in access and participation in higher education from a human rights perspective. This guide has been widely acclaimed by academics and student groups, and is already being used by partner organisations and individuals in Pakistan, Cameroon and Ivory Coast.



# The right to public education and the regulation of non-state actors involved in education



## Why we are working on this area

Strengthening public education systems is essential to realise the right to education for all, based on the rights to equality and non-discrimination.

The growing privatisation and commercialisation of education is a major threat to the realisation of the right to education.

There is a need to regulate and monitor private actors' involvement in education on the basis of human rights.

The Abidjan Principles, adopted in 2019 and widely recognised by human rights bodies, must be implemented.

## What we want to see

- Everyone to be able to enjoy the right to education regardless of their status or circumstances, particularly their ability to pay
- The right to public, free, inclusive, good quality education recognised and implemented
- Non-state actors involved in education to act in accordance with human rights
- The Abidjan Principles used and implemented by states, including judges, CSOs, academics and intergovernmental organisations

## What we will do

- **Promote** the Abidjan Principles and **provide capacity building and technical support** for their use and implementation
- **Report** on the impacts of the privatisation and commercialisation of education on the realisation of the right to education
- **Advocate** for the protection and implementation of the right to public education
- **Support civil society actors, including students, in monitoring and reporting on the impact of the privatisation and commercialisation of the right to education**, and on the development, implementation, and enforcement of laws and policies that guarantee public, free, inclusive quality education and regulate non-state actors involved in education
- **Collaborate with partners within existing networks** (PEHRC, Francophone network) to address this issue collectively

## Our impact to date

- **We played a leading role in developing the Abidjan Principles which have significantly advanced the understanding of the international human rights framework applying to the growing involvement of non-state actors in education.** Adopted in 2019 following an extensive consultative and drafting process, these Principles have become a reference document on the right to education, recognised by international and regional human rights bodies and used by academics, intergovernmental organisations, judges and civil society actors.
- **We monitored and reported about the impacts of the privatisation and commercialisation of education on the right to education.** This has led the UN treaty bodies to make recommendations to address the human rights issues posed by this phenomena, including as regards states' extraterritorial obligations. In the UK, this has led to a Parliamentary inquiry.
- **We advocated for the protection of public education and denounced the commercialisation of education**, as part of a collective advocacy effort. This has led the International Financial Corporation (IFC) to cease funding to for-profit K-12 (primary and secondary) education providers.



## Expanding our work to new areas

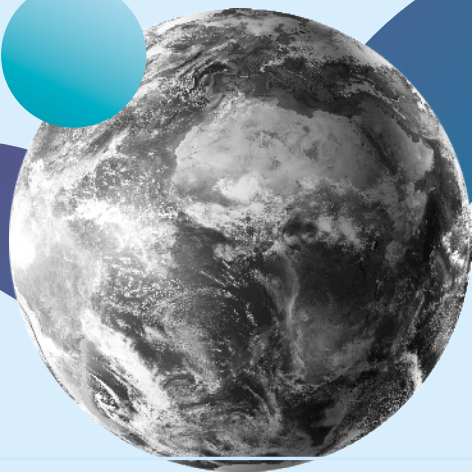
The issues of education and climate change and of the use of technology in education are new areas of work for which we will develop more detailed strategies based on a more comprehensive mapping and deeper analysis. The following paragraphs outline the significance of these areas and why we believe our efforts and expertise are best directed towards them, followed by an initial exploration of our activities and the changes we wish to see.



**Education and  
climate change**



**Technology in  
education**





# Education and climate change



## Why we are working on this issue

**Climate change is an existential threat to humanity**, with growing risks and severity that only worsen with each passing year, while global progress is woefully lacking.

**Climate change poses a threat to education.** This threat manifests itself in multiple interrelated ways. Education is often disrupted following climate change-related natural disasters, with loss or damage to school buildings, and school infrastructure sometimes requisitioned to temporarily house those whose dwellings have been damaged or destroyed. Climate change can cause an increase in poverty, which is a cause of school abandonment. Where local communities are ravaged by changes to climate patterns making previous forms of sustenance untenable or rendering accommodation unsafe, individuals are forced to move - usually internally in the first instance, thus placing pressure on different aspects of the regional education system. Forced movement and conflict sit in uneasy correlation; forced displacement, in turn, has an impact on insecurity, safety and thus the ability to learn.

**Education is a key to long term system change as regards the climate.** Through education, children and young people can become equipped with the tools and resources necessary to make positive, lasting changes to protect the planet. Education systems must adapt and transform to respond to climate change issues.

## What we want to see

The right to education protected, implemented and enforced for those impacted by climate change, particularly the most marginalised groups, including through the adoption of laws and policies aiming to ensure the continuity of education in the event of school closures and/or climate displacement, and to address inequalities due to the impact of climate change on the right to education.

Education systems reducing their impacts on climate change and addressing climate change in their curriculum in compliance with human rights, including through the adoption of laws and policies

# The use of technology in education



## Why we are working on this issue

Technology is reshaping our world. The growing use of technology in education, particularly post-pandemic, is transforming education deeply - these new technologies include artificial intelligence, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), learning machines, scripted learning via teacher tablets, and video-monitoring of classrooms

While these developments can be opportunities to expand quality education, they also raise issues from an ethical and human rights perspective, including regarding violations of students' privacy, restrictions in access to information and connectivity, inequalities in access to digital education, commercial interests that may conflict with the right to education, health issues due to intensive use of screens and/or lack of social contact, and infringement of quality education with online instruction replacing teachers

Education technology (Ed-Tech) must be developed and used in accordance with human rights and the aims of education in their human rights essence; and legal and policy frameworks must also be developed to protect students' and teachers' rights.

## What we want to see

- Ed-Tech developed and used in accordance with human rights
- Students' and teachers' rights legally recognised, protected, implemented, and enforced
- States adopt laws and policies which:
  - \* address inequalities in access to digital education
  - \* protect students' and teachers' rights, including the right to privacy and the right to access information
  - \* protect the right to education from commercialisation
  - \* guarantee quality education when technologies are used

## What we will do to advance rights in relation to technology in education and climate change

- **Inform** about these issues from a human rights perspective and research by providing legal analysis of the existing legal framework at national and international level, in addition to making recommendations for new developments
- **Advocate** to ensure these issues are addressed from a human rights perspective in international legal and political instruments
- Develop tools to **monitor these issues from a human rights perspective** and provide technical support to civil society actors, including youth, in monitoring and reporting on the use of technologies in education and on education and climate change from a human rights perspective, and on the development, implementation and enforcement of laws and policies



# How we will know we have achieved our aims across our thematic areas



**UN Special Rapporteurs**, particularly the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, will cover these issues in their reports



**States** will champion these issues with a human rights approach at international level



**UN treaty bodies** will highlight these issues in their concluding observations, and if relevant in decisions and general comments



**Civil society actors**, including youth/students, will monitor, report and advocate on these issues from a human rights perspective, holding states accountable



**The Human Rights Council** will address these issues in its resolutions, particularly the resolution on the right to education



**Academics** will include a human rights perspective when conducting research on these issues



**UNESCO, and other intergovernmental organisations**, will address these issues with a human rights approach in the development of new legal and policy instruments on the right to education as well as in political debates and statements



**Networks of diverse actors** will exist and will work collaboratively to advance the realisation of the right to education with specific objectives under each thematic area



# How we will implement our strategy

We will **count on our current agile multi-cultural and rapid responding team** of four dedicated staff bringing various and multiple expertises, experiences and perspectives, and able to work in English, French and Spanish.

We aim to **expand the team** to strengthen our capacity across all thematic areas, while maintaining the ability to respond to specific requests made by our partners. Currently based in India, UK and France, we seek to expand representation in other regions.

We will also **draw on the support of our Executive Board and Network of advisers.** We will recruit new board members and advisors to help steer the implementation of this strategy and expand RTE's impact and reach.

We will **increase our budget**, diversify our funds and explore new economic models to secure our sustainability. We will seek a balance between core funding which supports the delivery of the strategy as a whole, and project funding to implement specific activities under each thematic area.

We will **monitor our progress and impacts** and will continuously reassess the direction of our work, adapting and making changes when required. We will continuously reflect on our role as human rights experts in the field of education, and more broadly as an international civil society organisation as the context we work in keeps evolving.

We will continue to **ensure the wellbeing of RTE's staff** while delivering on this ambitious strategy.







# Right to Education



## CHARITY NUMBERS:

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**France:** W751261694



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