Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

2016 Annual Report
Message from the Co-Directors

In 2016, the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Global Initiative or GI-ESCR) continued to make strides in linking national and grassroots human rights advocates to international human rights law and mechanisms. Through this work we seek to build capacities for achieving transformative change by applying the human rights framework to challenge inequality, impoverishment, and marginalization.

Guided by our Strategic Plan, our work entailed directing our activities, outputs, and outcomes towards meaningful human rights impact – impact both on the ground aimed at preventing, ending or remedying human rights violations and impact at the level of normative development by working to ensure that human rights norms are informed from the perspectives of marginalized groups and communities and progressively interpreted. In this work, we value relationships and partnerships highly and see them as key to the effectiveness of GI-ESCR’s methodology and a world that increasingly enjoys human rights. We seek to connect local advocates and victims of economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights violations (and their advocates) with these international human rights mechanisms, so that they can directly contribute to shaping standards in the area of ESC rights. Our strategic approach is to facilitate access for partners and work with them to strengthen the human rights standards emerging from these bodies, so that they are informed from a peoples’ perspective, and we strive to increase the capacity of partner organizations to directly utilize these mechanisms through targeted training and facilitation of access to influential actors, experts and decision makers.
As this report highlights, our work in substantive areas such as women’s access to land and other productive resources, enforcing extra-territorial human rights obligations, ensuring that the principle of indivisibility is effectively used to hold those accountable for violating social rights and achieving remedies for those violations, including systemic violations, and addressing the human rights impact of privatization of social goods, was strengthened by our efficacy within the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

We believe that positive change happens when partners working together at different levels of advocacy join in concert to achieve and maximize the impact of wins made at various levels. As an organization, we partner with local advocates to play a key role in creating strategic ‘wins’ in international human rights spaces, which can then strengthen the advocacy of those partners on the ground. To be sustainable, effective and meaningful, however, we believe those wins must be informed by the experiences of those who directly experience violations of ESC rights. As such, our theory of change implies a cycle, or upward spiral of iterative and accumulative change where the local impacts and benefits the global, and the global in turn impacts and benefits the local. In other words, advocacy and impact must both ‘roll up’ (that is, when specific, smaller victories accrue into larger, normative, and strategic ESC rights ‘wins’) and strategies that ‘roll out’ (that is, when those larger wins actually get implemented and translated into concrete improvements in people lives). This is how we believe we are changing the world for the better.

We have a wonderful team of people to thank, including our donors, Board and staff in Geneva and Nairobi, who work hard every day to make human rights a reality for all. Together, our advocacy has further advanced international norms and by working closely with local partners to roll out those advances at the domestic level, we can see meaningful progress. Importantly, previous years of work have resulted in groundbreaking normative advancements in many areas which we continue to build upon in our current and future advocacy. We look forward to continuing this vital work to defend and protect economic, social and cultural rights.

Mayra Gomez and Bret Thiele, Co-Executive Directors
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Message from the Board of Directors

Part of the uniqueness of GI-ESCR is the role that it plays to defend rights on the global stage and it is distinctive for its focus, methods and strategies. We believe these are vital to overcoming the dramatic inequalities and unnecessary human suffering which today characterizes the world, as well as to unifying various critical sectors (for example, environmental justice, global governance, women’s rights, and the development sector) to align more closely and more powerfully. The complexity of today’s and tomorrow’s issues go beyond what any individual organization, sector or field can do.

Peers, partners and others in the field in which we operate have recognized the unique contribution of GI-ESCR, including the ways in which we partner with others, our key methodologies, and our results. Within a world of elite, often northern and western driven and dominated power relationships in foreign assistance, technical assistance, and human rights, GI-ESCR is seen as an exception. It strives to be a true partner, and as respectful of local and national voices, processes, and values.

From 2010-2016, GI-ESCR has grown into a more robust and consolidated organization which has achieved concrete and tangible results in each of the programmatic priorities highlighted in this report. GI-ESCR is an organization that effectively navigates legal and technical spaces, but which nonetheless comes to the scene with heart. At its core, the organization underscores that change is something we all can only contribute to when we have enthusiasm, hope, and a deeply seeded commitment to the cause. Our work often and intentionally generates results that build the foundation for future advocacy. Our aim is to ensure that concrete outcomes and impact not only further our mission but lay the foundation for future human rights advocacy of others. These results build into our vision of a world where the human rights framework reflects the real world experiences of all of us, effectively furthering social and economic justice and human dignity, and catalyzing change from the local to the global, back to the local. This report illustrates recent achievements in making that vision a reality.

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1. Introduction

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural (Global Initiative or GI-ESCR) seeks to advance the realization of economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights throughout the world, tackling the endemic problem of global poverty and social injustice through a human rights lens. In doing so, we rely on the full spectrum of human rights and in particular civil and political rights such as the rights to participation and access to information. We believe that humanity’s current crisis – wherein close to two billion people worldwide daily lack access to adequate nutrition, health care, education, housing, water and sanitation – will only be overcome through the concerted efforts of human rights, women’s rights, environmental and development organizations and agencies. The Global Initiative seeks to play a catalyzing role in fostering these cross-sector collaborations on key issues and linking them to human rights law and mechanisms.

This report highlights the Global Initiative’s key activities and resulting achievements across these strategic areas and discusses the relevance of the gains made, as well as opportunities for building upon these successes.

2. Strategic Litigation and Legal Advocacy

Challenging Systemic Violations of Social Rights, Advocating for Positive Obligations to be Fulfilled, and Advancing Extra-Territorial Obligations (ETOs)

GI-ESCR took a lead role within the ESCR-Net Strategic Litigation Working Group in the first ever case to be decided under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The case dealt with foreclosures in Spain and the amicus intervention addressed systemic issues such as eviction in the context of the housing foreclosure crisis due in part to the financial crisis and austerity measures. The case set a precedent for amicus curiae interventions under the Optional Protocol and resulted in expanding the due process protections related to the prohibition on forced eviction to evictions in the context of foreclosure.

GI-ESCR also worked closely with the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, including participating in an expert group meeting, resulting in reports dealing with systemic violations of the right to adequate housing with a particular focus on homelessness and on the indivisibility of the right to adequate housing and the right to life. This work further builds the foundation for future strategic litigation dealing with the indivisibility of rights and how best to remedy systemic and structural violations of social rights.

Parallel Reports aimed at developing norms related to ETOs were submitted to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) dealing with Canada, the United Kingdom and France. The resulting Concluding Observations on Canada and the United Kingdom had strong language dealing with the ETO to protect in the context of transnational corporations acting abroad.

On Canada, the Committee reaffirmed that the ETO to protect requires States to: (1) regulate its transnational corporations for activities abroad to ensure that they do not violate Covenant rights; and (2) to ensure access to
accountability mechanisms and remedies in the event of such violations. The Committee added that the ETO to protect also requires that those corporations “conduct human rights impact assessments prior to making investment decisions.”

The Committee, however, went further with a welcomed focus on the ETO to fulfill. There, the Committee expressed its concern “about the lack of impact assessments explicitly taking into account human rights prior to the negotiation of international trade and investments agreements” and for the first time stated that the Covenant requires “that trade and investment agreements negotiated by Canada recognize the primacy of Canada’s international human rights over investors’ interests, so that the introduction of investor-State dispute settlement procedures shall not create obstacles to the full realization of Covenant rights.”

Regarding the United Kingdom, the Committee expressed its concerns that in some cases UK development aid “has been reportedly used for activities in contravention of economic, social and cultural rights in the receiving countries” and recommended that the UK “adopt a human rights-based approach in its international development cooperation” by conducting systematic and independent human rights impact assessments prior to any project; monitoring, effectively and regularly, the human rights impact of these projects; and ensuring access to complaint mechanisms.

The Concluding Observations on France resulted in the first ever language dealing with the ETOs of Member States of international financial institutions such as the World Bank. Specifically, the Committee urged France “to take all possible measures to ensure that decisions and policies adopted within international organizations to which he belongs comply with obligations under the Covenant.” This work before CESC culminated with the Committee adopting an official statement on austerity measures and public debt, which included ETOs including in the context of international financial institutions.

Parallel Reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child also resulted in Concluding Observation on the United Kingdom which covered ETOs in the area of transnational corporations and bilateral development assistance and international cooperation.

An Individual Complaint submitted under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was finalized and the Human Rights Committee is ready to make its decision. The Complaint addresses the ETOs of Canada in the context of two Canadian transnational corporations involved in human rights violations in Palestine. A challenge that arose is that the final decision is delayed as the Committee is under a heavy workload dealing with expedited cases in the context of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe.

Regarding the draft General Comment on businesses and human rights being considered by CESC, GI-ESCR provided a written submission, lobbied the Committee as a whole as well as its individual members, and coordinated like-minded civil society to ensure that the draft had a strong section on ETOs. The emerging draft has strong language on ETOs and the task now is to defend the inclusion of that language against challenges from some States. The language is supported by and based upon results achieved through our work using the Parallel Reporting process.

In order to publicize the work on ETOs, the pronouncements on ETOs from UN bodies, as well as arguments and strategies to advance ETOs, are made available in a frequently updated Working Paper by GI-ESCR which is disseminated widely through the ETO Consortium and ESCR-Net.

GI-ESCR also participated in the Global Conference of the ETO Consortium where it provided information on strategic litigation and parallel reporting strategies and results and reported out on the work of the Consortium’s Steering Committee. This intervention informed the ETO Consortium’s 2018 – 2020 Strategic Plan where strategic litigation was chosen as a key priority to further accountability for ETOs.

GI-ESCR also participated in the Global Strategy Meeting of ESCR-Net, including reporting out on the work of the Strategic Litigating Working Group and crafting the next ESCR-Net Strategic Plan.
3. Advocating for Women’s Rights to Land and other Productive Resources

Advocacy to Advance Women’s Rights to Land and Productive Resources with UN Treaty Bodies

Over the course of 2016, GI-ESCR made significant progress resulting in increased recognition and application of international human rights standards related to women’s rights to land and other productive resources.

Pursuant to our Strategic Plan, GI-ESCR worked closely with locally-based partners to facilitate their access to international human rights mechanisms. All together, four parallel reports on African countries addressing issues related to women’s property rights were researched, drafted and submitted to UN human rights mechanisms. Specifically, these Parallel Report included those submitted to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) on Kenya (with FIDA-K); to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on Burundi (with ActionAid Burundi); to the UN Human Rights Committee (HRComm) on Ghana (with IGED-Africa); and CEDAW on Rwanda (with ActionAid Rwanda and the Rwanda Initiative for Sustainable Development).

On Burundi, the CEDAW Committee in its Concluding Observations expressed concern about the precarious situation of and high poverty rates among rural women, exacerbated by increasing scarcity of arable land – an essential means for their survival. It noted with concern that women encounter legal and administrative barriers in registering their land contrary to Article 36 of the Constitution, due to the application of discriminatory customary rules whereby land is allocated exclusively to men. The CEDAW Committee made several pertinent recommendations, which echoed those made in our written submission with ActionAid Burundi, including that Burundi ensure women do not encounter any legal or administrative impediments in exercising their Constitutional right to land ownership, and that it urgently finalize and adopt the draft revised Code of Persons and of the Family as well as the draft law on inheritance.

On Ghana, the Parallel Report submitted with IGED-Africa highlighted women’s rights to inheritance in Ghana, as well as property rights of spouses during marriage and upon divorce. In its Concluding Observations, the HRComm expressed concern about the existence of provisions that discriminate against women in the State party’s legislation on property ownership, access to formal credit and inheritance. In particular, the Committee noted with concern the delays in adopting the Property Rights of Spouses Bill, which was published in the Gazette in 2013 (arts. 2, 3, 23 and 26). The HRComm said that Ghana should step up its efforts to raise popular awareness of, and change, customary attitudes that are detrimental to women’s rights. The State party should, in full compliance with the Covenant, expedite the adoption of the legislation to regulate intestate succession and the property rights of spouses, with a view to guaranteeing equality between men and women.
On Kenya, we presented a parallel report with FIDA-Kenya and Hakijamii on women’s land rights. In its Concluding Observations CESCRI made several key recommendations echoing our report, and asked the State party take all the steps necessary to review the existing laws with a view to repealing gender discriminatory provisions, including those in customary law, especially in relation rights of women to inheritance and ownership of land. It also recommended that Kenya the Matrimonial Property Act of 2013 and take all the measures necessary to strengthen its enforcement once reviewed, including raising awareness among women, local and traditional communities and their leaders, the judiciary and land administration officials and providing legal support to women to claim their rights. It also recommended that the State party prioritize the enactment of the Community Land Bill and the Evictions and Resettlement Bill.

And finally on Rwanda, GI-ESCR’s written submission with ActionAid Rwanda and the Rwanda Initiative for Sustainable Development to the CEDAW Committee highlighted that Rwanda should be encouraged to intensify efforts to raise awareness about women’s land rights under national law, as well as the benefits of ensuring equal land rights for women, particularly among rural women and men, traditional leaders and local authorities; take immediate steps to address and remedy negative customs and traditional practices, especially in rural areas, which affect full enjoyment of women’s land and property rights; and address and fill existing legal gaps so as to provide equal protection of property rights of women in informal/consensual and polygamous marriages, including by harmonizing the law on Gender-Based Violence with the National Land Law. An oral submission was also presented during the review with the assistance of our partner IWRAW-AP.

GI-ESCR has also been working to increase its work with partners to encourage implementation of previous Concluding Observations (something that was prioritized during our strategic planning process). Here, we have helped to support ‘roll out’ projects with partners in four countries: Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Ghana. These countries were chosen because of the strength of our partners and that fact that we have in many cases been able to achieve advocacy results from more than one treaty body.

On Kenya, our advocacy with partners over time has yielded successful Concluding Observations addressing women’s land rights from CESCRI (2016) and the HRComm (2012). In country, our partner FIDA-K held a strategy meeting with both state and non-state actors in Nairobi. The meeting, aimed at popularizing the Concluding Observations on Kenya by CESCRI, was attended by representatives of several key NGOs and national institutions, including the National Gender and Equality Commission.

On Burundi, similar efforts were made to popularize the Concluding Observations of CESCRI from 2015, however the focus was on raising the awareness of local women themselves. Because the Kilimanjaro Initiative was a major focus of ActionAid Burundi’s work on women’s land rights in the country, raising awareness amongst communities and rural women of the Concluding Observations fed into that overall advocacy effort. Four training sessions were organized from the community level in the Provinces of Rutana and Ruyigi, which brought together 201 women’s representatives who were informed about the content of the CESCRI Concluding Observations.

In Ghana, we are working with IGED-Africa on developing an information pack on relevant sections of the Concluding Observations from the CEDAW Committee (2015) with the aim of sharing this widely with CSOs and also utilize this as advocacy materials to engage with relevant government Ministries in 2017 (after the elections held in December).

In Uganda, we have been working with our partner, the Center on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Africa (CESCRA) to promote implementation of the Concluding Observations in Uganda from CESCRI (2015). A meeting was held in August with the Ministry of Gender and various CSOs (participants included the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, UWONET, HURINET, ULA, ISER,
Advocacy before the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights on Women’s Rights to Land and Productive Resources

We have been working in close partnership with IGED-Africa, ISLA, KHRC and FIDA-Kenya to see the adoption by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) of a General Comment to the Maputo Protocol on Article 7(d) addressing women’s equal right to property within the context of divorce. Progress has been slow, however, due to the work schedule of the ACHPR. Over the summer of 2016, we organized a redrafting meeting (supported by OSF and held in Mombasa in August) which enabled us to reflect and integrate comments from Comm. Lucy Asuagbor (the current Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa - SRRWA). The revised/current draft was then translated and submitted to the Commission for consideration at the fall session of the ACHPR. However, we were told that the Commission did not have time to consider the draft, and hence consideration has been postponed to 2017.

In collaboration with the Economic and Socio-Cultural Rights Working Group’s (ECOSOCC WG) of the African Commission’s public session, IGED-Africa presented our joint publication on women’s land and property rights in the ACHPR and also discussed efforts to advance the adoption of the General Comment. In addition, IGED-Africa in collaboration with ISLA and KHRC also organized two side events on the General Comment and on establishing the Women’s Rights Alliance. There were also side meetings with the SRRWA, the Vice Chair of the ACHPR and the Chair of the ECOSOCC WG to discuss the newly drafted General Comment and its presentation to the Commission as well as the opportunity to deepen collaboration with these mechanisms and organs. At last word, the SRWWA, the Vice-Chairperson of the ACHPR and the Chairperson of the ECOSOCC WG were confident the Draft General Comment on Art. 7(d) would be adopted.

2016 Strategic Meeting to Advance Women’s Land and Property Rights in Africa

The 2016 Strategic Meeting to Advance Women’s Land and Property Rights in Africa was held on 21 March 2016 (OSF offices in NYC) and involved the participation of 27 advocates for women’s land rights working at national, regional and/or international levels. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss general and ongoing strategies to advance women’s land rights, and to discuss specific advocacy opportunities, including the way forward on a General Comment to the Maputo Protocol on Women’s Land and Property Rights on ‘equitable share’; utilizing the CEDAW General Recommendation No. 34 on the Rights of Rural Women; discussing women’s land rights in the follow up to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and addressing issues of land grabbing, extractives, climate change, and other threats to women’s land rights. A list of organizational profiles for organizations working on women’s land rights was updated and circulated to participants after the meeting.

Advancing Visibility of Women’s Rights to Land and Productive Resources within Human Rights Discussions and Consultations

With CEDAW, GI-ESCR has had a couple of opportunities to weigh in on some work that they are doing to either develop new General Recommendations (GR), or to revise currently standing ones. On the first, there is an effort now to develop a new GR on Disaster Risk Reduction in a Changing Climate, and CEDAW held a day of discussion on this issue earlier this year. With our partners Landesa and APWLD, we submitted an original written submission to influence the draft, and since a draft has been circulated by the CEDAW Committee, we also had the opportunity to submit a second written submission. Through our written submissions we have highlighted the importance of 1) addressing the multiple threats posed to women’s land rights by climate change;
(2) ensuring climate change strategies do not undermine women’s land rights; (3) recognizing and incorporating the positive impacts of women’s land rights into climate change mitigation and adaptation; and (4) promoting women’s participation and leadership in tackling climate change.

CEDAW is also revising its GR 19 on Gender-Based Violence against Women, and here we have also put in a written submission highlighting the links between violence against women and lack of protection of women’s land and property rights. We have also suggested some specific language changes to better reflect these concerns.
4. Human Rights Impact of Privatization of Social Rights

GI-ESCR in 2016 carried out research and advocacy in eight countries, and before several UN treaty bodies as detailed below. Additionally, GI-ESCR seized opportunities for complementary advocacy before several UN Special Procedures, in particular the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education and the UN Human Rights Council, and disseminated information about the project to various fora. GI-ESCR also began to work on the development of human rights norms on privatization of education through Guiding Principles.

Major progress has been made since last year in terms of dialogue and policy discussions at the national level. Successful dialogues are taking place in Kenya and Uganda to reflect on the policy and legislative framework for private schools, so as to develop smart frameworks able to integrate private schools playing a positive role, without undermining public education, and phasing out detrimental private schools.

Development and Advancement of the Guiding Principles on State Obligations Regarding Private Schools

An initial draft of the human rights Guiding Principles on the obligations of States regarding private actors in education was developed in early 2016, together with OSF and the Right to Education Project (RTE), during a meeting in Dar es Salam in 2016.
February 2016. It was shared at a consultation meeting held in Vancouver during the CIES 2016, where about 30 academic experts attended a 2.5 hours meeting.

Feedback was consolidated into a first draft with partners at OSF-ESP and RTE, which formed the basis for additional consultations in Bangkok (30 – 31 August 2016) and Nairobi (5 – 7 September 2016).

The Asia Pacific Regional Consultation held in Bangkok brought together a diverse group of more than 50 participants from 17 countries in the Asia Pacific region, representing national education coalitions, civil society and human rights organizations, experts, academics and UN institutions.

In September 2016, the Eastern Africa Regional Consultation was held in Nairobi. The consultation was attended by over 70 participants, including the new Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Dr Koumbou Boly Barry. The participants represented national education coalitions, civil society organizations and government representatives from more than 10 countries in Africa.

The concept of the Guiding Principles has also been shared with various stakeholders, including representatives of relevant organizations and States in Geneva, the Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO, and the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP), in order to build support for the development of the normative framework, and to plan future consultations.

To advance the development of the normative framework, progress has been made towards expert background papers and the Privatization Analysis Framework (PAF) intended to accompany the Guiding Principles, that was developed through national reports in the previous grants. In September 2016, GI-ESCR and RTE published an article in the Oxford Review of Education unpacking the PAF to analyze private actors’ engagement in education systems.

**Stakeholders’ Dialogues**

**CIES**
GI-ESCR took an active role in the 2016 CIES conference.

In 2016, two staff members of GI-ESCR took part in the conference in Vancouver. In addition to a pre-consultation on the Guiding Principles, we organized a panel on the regulation of private actors and took part on a panel on commercial schools. We also organized a workshop on the issue of regulation of private schools.

All these events were well-attended. We produced various materials, including Power Points, which we disseminated.

**Building the Francophone Movement**
Since September 2015 GI-ESCR has been working to mobilize a francophone response to the issue of privatization in education. An important development, though francophone countries have been less active on the issue, they hold a high interest and add a rich perspective to the debate.

In March 2016, five francophone organizations (Solidarité Laïque, the Coalition Française, the Comité Syndical Francophone de l'Education et de la Formation, the Right to Education Project, and the Fédération Internationale des Ceméa), in partnership with the Sciences Po Human Rights Clinic, held a one-day meeting on privatization in education. It was held at La Francophonie Organisation (OIF) in Paris, bringing together 70 people from a dozen of francophone countries across Europe, Africa and the Caribbean.

The meeting laid the foundation for a Francophone declaration against commercialisation in education, which was finalized and circulated for endorsement in June 2016, and used as an advocacy tool before and during the Francophonie Summit held in November 2016. This meeting was also the basis for the formation of an informal
A francophone network on privatization in education. The network is composed of the above-mentioned organizations, who work to coordinate a broader group of organizations to mobilize collectively towards the November Francophone summit.

In November 2016, 57 heads of state from the International Organization of the Francophone (OIF) signed the Antananarivo Declaration which contained a strong statement against commercialization of education, in support of public education and the regulation of private actors in education. As States affirmed their support for public education, the launch of the call of the francophone civil society against commercialization of education also took place in December 2016.

**Liberia**

In early 2016, Liberia made the striking decision to outsource its pre-primary and primary public education system through a public-private partnership called ‘Partnership Schools for Liberia’ to Bridge International Academies. This sparked outrage and criticism from many stakeholders including civil society. After GI-ESCR and other partners provided him with information, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Kishore Singh, issued a statement stressing that the plan violated Liberia’s legal and moral obligations under the right to education, advising the nation to consider other alternatives. Following sustained advocacy against it, the initial plan has been altered into a three-year pilot of 93 schools, operated by eight private actors.

**Consortium and collective work**

GI-ESCR is still taking an active role in the development of the Consortium of organizations working on privatization in education and human rights, the Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium (PEHR). The rules of functioning of the Consortium were finalized and adopted in April 2016.

The third Global Meeting on privatization in education and human rights, held in Nairobi in September 2016, was attended by over 30 organizations from 20 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. ISER, EACHRights, ANCEFA, RTE, GI-ESCR and OSF-ESP organized the three-day meeting where consortium members reviewed the 2015-2016 strategic plan and developed the strategic advocacy plan for 2016-2017. During the meeting organizations also discussed and defined a common position on solutions to the negative impacts of privatization in education, and corresponding national, regional and international advocacy strategies. Participants also clarified and agreed on clear details for the structure, management, membership and communication of the PEHR Consortium.

GI-ESCR also created a mailing-list, to share key news externally on the issue, which has over 500 subscribers.

**Technical Support**

GI-ESCR provides technical support at the domestic level, and works with human rights treaty bodies and UN Special Rapporteurs to highlight the ramifications of privatization of social services, responses are used to achieve positive change at national levels.

**Kenya**

In Kenya, GI-ESCR continues working with the East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights), in partnership with the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), the Economic and Social Rights Center-Hakijamii, the International Commission of Jurists – Kenya Chapter (ICJ-Kenya), Concern Worldwide – Kenya, and the CRADLE – Children’s Foundation.

With help from GI-ESCR, EACHRights attended the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2016 (building up on the report submitted at the pre-session in 2015) where the issue of privatization in education was raised by the Committee during Kenya’s review. For the first time ever, a UN Committee specifically addressed concerns over the low quality of education in private schools “funded by foreign development aid”, here indirectly referring to Bridge International Academies, in the Concluding Observations that followed in February 2016. A joint press release was issued where national organizations supported by GI-ESCR welcomed the Concluding
Observations and called upon the Kenyan government to ensure that quality of education in all schools meet minimum standards.

In January 2016, GI-ESCR also participated in a meeting organized by the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) which brought together all civil society stakeholders in an effort to review and strengthen national strategies in response to the commercialization and privatization of education. This involved a recap of the steps taken and progress made thus far with the research into privatization in general and Bridge International Academies (BIA) in particular, and plans to carry out more in-depth research on BIA and complementary research in Homa Bay County. This meeting was followed by a press conference where the organizations jointly issued a press release signed by 12 organizations calling on the Government to seal legislative and regulatory gaps in the law and ensure compliance with minimum standards while adequately funding free quality education for all children.

In February 2016, Kenya was under review before the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), in partnership with GI-ESCR, EACHRights attended the sessions in Geneva. The CESCR issued its Concluding Observations in March 2016, recognizing that “the proliferation of so-called ‘low-cost private schools’ […] has led to segregation or discriminatory access” to education, the Committee recommended, amongst other things, that Kenya “bring the Registration Guidelines for Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training in line with Articles 13 and 14 of the Covenant and other relevant international standards; that it ensure that all schools, public, private, formal or non-formal, are registered; and that it monitor their compliance with the guidelines.” These were disseminated in a press release led by EACHRights.

In March 2016, the Kenyan Ministry of Education launched the Registration Guidelines for Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training (APBET Guidelines). This followed a joint letter sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Chairperson of the National Assembly Committee on Education, and advocacy led by Kenyan partners with the support of GI-ESCR since 2015.

Opportunities for engagement with the legislators have also been realized. In March 2016, GI-ESCR and EACHRights held meetings with the Chair Person and Vice Chair Person of the National Assembly Education Committee where discussions focused on the policy options to address realistically the situation of low-cost private schools This discussion set the stage for further consultations with the Education Committee around the possibility of developing a new law or regulation on the alternative provision of basic education. GI-ESCR will continue to give technical support to national partners on this advocacy front towards the development of human rights compliant policies and solutions.

GI-ESCR supported EACHRights to host a meeting in April 2016 for civil society stakeholders to review the progress made in 2016 and make plans for the way forward. The partner organizations, including the CRADLE and Concern Worldwide agreed that the next steps needed to focus on the enforcement of the Registration Guidelines and laying the groundwork for a strategic litigation on the education situation in Mathare, an informal settlement in Nairobi. The stakeholders at the meeting also agreed to host the East Africa Consultation on the Guiding Principles and the Global Meeting on Privatization in education and human rights in Nairobi in September 2016 (discussed above).

**Haiti**

Following the review of Haiti before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 15th January 2016, the Committee issued their Concluding Observations in February 2016 with two ground-breaking statements on the nature of education drawing from information provided by GI-ESCR and partners working on the country (Sciences Po Human Rights Clinic and Haitian organizations). First, it indicated that States should regulate private schools to ensure they do not engage in for-profit education, and second, that PPPs should not entail any form of commercialization of education. GI-ESCR issued a statement welcoming these findings.

GI-ESCR worked with the Sciences Po Human Rights Clinic to support a group of local organizations in the development of a report on how privatization is undermining the right to education in Haiti. This report was

**Philippines**

In February 2016, GI-ESCR supported the development of a parallel report led by the Philippines Education Network (E-Net Philippines) which was submitted to the CESCR. The Philippines were reviewed in September 2016, the CESCR Concluding Observations issued in October 2016 noted with concern “the proliferation of so-called ‘low-cost private schools’ at the primary and secondary levels owing to inadequacies in the public school system” and “the low quality of education provided by those private schools, the top-up fees to cover the full cost of private education imposed on parents, and the lack of State regulation of those schools,” leading to segregation and discriminatory access to education. The Committee recommended that the Philippines strengthen its public education sector, ensure that low-cost private schools are registered and monitor their compliance with relevant regulations.

These Concluding Observations were highlighted in a press release by our partners, the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and E-Net Philippines, who expressed confidence that they would be applied towards progressive education reforms in the Philippines. GI-ESCR also issued a press release in support of our local partners welcoming the important recommendations.

**Uganda**

In March 2016, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) issued Concluding Observations following Uganda’s review in 2015. The ACHPR expressed concerns that “the increase in the establishment of private schools […] could result in discrimination against children from low-income households” and was further alarmed that this growth of private education was being encouraged by the Ugandan Government. The ACHPR recommended that the Government of Uganda should “increase its investment in public education… and ensure the quality thereof” while also “regulating the quality of education being provided by private schools”.

Following these recommendations, GI-ESCR was invited to attend in March 2016 a meeting organized by our national partners in Uganda, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, with officials from the Ugandan Ministry of Education to begin to chart a way forward to comply with the recommendations from the ACHPR and UN CRC. At this meeting, GI-ESCR presented on the impacts of privatization around the world, exposing in particular the evidence regarding Bridge International Academies, and exploring possible smart solutions.

Following this engagement, in August 2016 the Ugandan Ministry of Education announced their decision to close all schools operated by Bridge International Academies. This was based on technical reports from the Ministry which revealed that Bridge schools do not respect national standards, that “the materials used did not promote pupil teacher interaction” and that poor sanitation and hygiene put the life and safety of the children in danger. Following this announcement, ISER, supported by GI-ESCR, spearheaded a press release supported by 18 national and international organizations. This supported the Ministry’s decision considered to uphold quality education, the order of closure confirmed civil society concerns on Bridge.

In response to the order for closure, BIA sought judicial review of the Ministry’s decision at the Ugandan High Court. The court found that the process followed to close the schools was fair and legal and as such the ministry was well within its mandate to order the closure of the schools. In support of our Ugandan partner, ISER, GI-ESCR joined 14 other organizations in a press statement taking note of this judgment and calling for the governments and organizations to commit to the full implementation of human rights standards. The 15 organizations further committed to work with the Government of Uganda and any other interested authority towards this end.

**Nepal**

In April 2016, the National Campaign for Education-Nepal (NCE Nepal), the Nepal National Teachers Association (NNTA), and GI-ESCR along with other partners presented a parallel report to the CRC on segregation in education and discrimination against girls resulting from the privatization of education in Nepal. The context here was unique
because of the post-earthquake reconstruction. GI-ESCR also attended the Nepalese review before the CRC between 19th and 20th May 2016 and supported the presented of representatives from the Nepalese education coalition. In the Concluding Observations issued in July the CRC expressed concern about the emergence of private schools which worsen segregation and discrimination while reducing overall the quality of education. The CRC recommended that the state “take appropriate regulatory measures to ensure that private providers of education do not undermine social cohesion or exacerbate segregation and discrimination”.

In June 2016, the Government of Nepal presented its 2016/2017 budget where the States allocation for the education sector dropped sharply from 12.04% to just 11.6%. In response to this regressive development, GI-ESCR supported national partner, the NCE Nepal, to develop and disseminate a press statement expressing strong dissatisfaction with the budget declaration and the introduction of the voucher system that may lead to the privatization of education. In support of NCE Nepal, GI-ESCR published a brief information statement on this development.

Pakistan
In April 2016, several organizations led by the Pakistani education coalition and supported by GI-ESCR submitted a report to the CRC on the impact of privatized education in Pakistan on the right to education. Pakistan was reviewed by the CRC on 25th and 26th May 2016. GI-ESCR was present during the review and supported partners from the Pakistan Coalition for Education who were attending. The Concluding Observations highlighted the CRC’s concern with the increasing privatization of education in Pakistan “with a lack of measures to ensure compliance of private schools with minimum educational standards”. The Committee recommended that Pakistan “prevent privatization of schools and establish mechanisms to monitor the compliance of private schools with minimum educational standards […]”.

United Kingdom
In May 2016, the United Kingdom was reviewed by CRC. GI-ESCR supported a report by RTE and attended the review sessions. During the review, the Committee questioned the UK’s support for private schools in developing countries, expressing concerns on the Government’s support to private schools resisting developing countries’ regulatory efforts to put in place minimum education standards. The Concluding Observations captured the CRCs concerns that the UK’s international development cooperation was funding low-fee, private informal schools run by for-profit enterprises which “may contribute to substandard education, less investment in free and quality public education and deepened inequalities in recipient countries […]”. The Committee recommended that the state should ensure it prioritizes free, quality public schools and refrain from funding for-profit private schools.

The Concluding Observations were supported by a press release signed by GI-ESCR, RTE and the National Union of Teachers (NUT), which is also available in French.

A similar report was submitted to the CESCR when the UK was reviewed in June 2016. The CESCR Concluding Observations were issued in July 2016 expressing concerns on “the financial support provided to private actors for low-cost private education projects in developing countries” which undermine quality and entrench segregation and discrimination. The Committee urged the UK to adopt a human right based approach in its international development cooperation. This report was disseminated in a joint press release endorsed globally by 11 organizations, including GI-ESCR.

France
In May 2016, GI-ESCR and Sciences Po Law School Clinic jointly submitted an alternative report to the CESCR and the CRC on France’s extra-territorial obligations and responsibilities with respect to the harmful impacts of the growth and consolidation of the privatized education system in Haiti. This report was made in the context of France’s membership in two international organizations – the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education – which funded a controversial project in Haiti, further promoting an education system highly unbalanced towards private actors. In the Concluding Observations issued by CESCR in June, the Committee recommended that the State “develop robust methodological tools” to analyze the impact of operations funded by their development agencies on the enjoyment of rights under the ICESCR. The Committee also urged the state to take all possible steps to
ensure that decisions and policies of international organizations of which it is a member are in line with its obligations under the Covenant. These recommendations were disseminated in a press release by GI-ESCR.

**International Advocacy on Privatization of Education**

*Engagement with the United Nations*

In addition to supporting the submission of parallel reports to UN treaty bodies, and working with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, GI-ESCR with RTE has undertaken advocacy at the Human Rights Council (HRC) seeking the inclusion of privatization in a HRC resolution. These efforts paid off in July 2016 with the adoption of an historical HRC Resolution urging all states to invest in public education and “address any negative impacts of the commercialization of education” by establishing a regulatory framework to regulate and monitor education providers. GI-ESCR coordinated the publication of a widely supported joint press release to welcome the resolution. The press release was also translated into French, Portuguese and Spanish, which has made it possible to be used by many other organizations in different regions of the world in their advocacy.

GI-ESCR has also provided information to and regularly engaged with the former UN Special Rapporteur for the right to education, Mr Kishore Singh, and continues to share findings of the work with his successor, Dr Koumbou Boly Barry.

*Engagement with the World Bank*

GI-ESCR co-sponsored the session “For-profit, Fee-charging Private Schools: Meeting the World Bank’s Goals?” at the Civil Society Policy Forum of the 2016 World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings in April 2016. This discussion was an opportunity for GI-ESCR and our partners to advance the aims of our collective advocacy work by exchanging views with representatives from the World Bank Group towards ensuring the realization of the right to education while working towards meeting development goals. The discussion highlighted concerns raised about donor support to for-profit companies operating fee-charging private schools for the poor. A recording of the session is available here.
5. Additional United Nations Advocacy

Our United Nations advocacy is a methodology that cross cuts all of our work. That methodology entails connecting local human rights activists to international human rights law and mechanisms so that they can leverage international human rights law for local impact. Within this framework, we also strive to inform international human rights norms from the perspective of marginalized groups and communities, resulting in progressive, expansive and meaningful human rights protections globally.

Human Rights Defenders of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR)

In 2016 we worked with partners to advance the recognition and understanding within the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies of the role of human rights defenders of economic, social and cultural rights. In March, after concerted advocacy by civil society groups, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution focusing on human rights defenders of ESCR. The resolution reinforced that those working to promote and protect the rights to housing, water, education and other ESCR rights are also human rights defenders and are under increasing and serious attack throughout the world.

Subsequently, we worked with International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) and Platform Against Impunity to draw this issue to the attention of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and called on them to publish a public statement about the need to protect such defenders. In the meantime, GI-ESCR and its partners highlighted the situation of ESCR rights defenders in Honduras, Angola and the Philippines in submissions to the Committee as part of its periodic reporting procedure.
Our recommendations to the Committee on the importance of guaranteeing the protection of those working on labor rights were also taken up in the Committee’s recent General Comment on just and favorable conditions of work.

Following a powerful letter to the Committee signed by over 300 civil society organizations and a briefing of the Committee with advocates from across the globe working on health, land and environment and labor issues, in September the Committee made a public statement which confirmed that States have a legal obligation under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to respect and protect human rights defenders working towards the realization of ESC rights.

50th Anniversary Year of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

As 2016 was the 50th anniversary year of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, GI-ESCR together with its partners, Frederich Ebert Stiftung and CCPR Centre, to organize and host a side event during the March Human Rights Council session at which the Deputy High Commissioner spoke together with Committee members from the CESCR and the Human Rights Committee and civil society representatives on the topic of civil society engagement with the Committees past and future. We also hosted a meeting between civil society and the CESCR and the Human Rights Committee to discuss the evolution of civil society engagement with the Committees and make recommendations for further enhancing that engagement. The committee members heard from civil society representatives from Latin America and Africa about the importance of facilitating active engagement between civil society and the committees and responded positively with comments and questions. The Committees were also presented with a Paper, developed by civil society, which considered the history of civil society engagement with these two committees, identified some good practices and suggested areas for improvement.

Business and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

On business and economic, social and cultural rights, in addition to our advocacy involving the extra-territorial obligation to protect mentioned above, we have continued to engage in debates about access to justice, including accountability and remedies, for business abuse of human rights, the efforts towards a treaty on business and human rights and privatization and social rights (see above). We have also participated in the process for the development of a General Comment on ESC rights and business activities being undertaken by CESCR, through a submission and on-going discussions on the content of the General Comment, including in particular on extra-territorial obligations.

Women’s Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Women’s ESC rights have again been a significant focus of our work in Geneva. We have advocated for the inclusion of gender sensitive language in various ESC rights resolutions of the Human Rights Council and for recognition of the importance of women’s ESC rights in the Council’s resolution focusing on violence against women. Similarly, we made recommendations to CEDAW regarding its up-dated General Recommendation on violence against women, to increase the recognition of the links between lack of fulfillment of women’s ESC rights and their increased exposure to violence.

Again, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the ICESCR, we also released a publication on women’s ESC rights which we launched at a side event during the September session of the Human Rights Council. The side event was well supported by States and civil society who heard from the Special Rapporteur on the rights to water and sanitation speaking about gender equality and the rights to water and sanitation, Ms Melona Declan of Defend Job Philippines who presented powerful testimony of women sweat shop workers in the Philippines and State perspectives from Namibia, Australia and Finland. Our Geneva Representative, Lucy McKernan, also spoke about the publication which traces the past 50 years of the operation of the Covenant and assesses how the Covenant has addressed women’s ESC rights, highlighting in particular important statements by the Committee on substantive equality, violence against women, traditional practices and intersectionality.

In addition, in response to an invitation from the OHCHR we submitted two reports on women’s empowerment and the right to work. The first report, submitted jointly with the National Union of Domestic Workers of Trinidad and Tobago, highlighted the situation of women domestic workers in Trinidad and Tobago and across the world and the gendered discrimination faced by these workers. The second report was submitted jointly with Defend Job Philippines and addressed the
situation of women sweat shop workers in the Philippines and again underlined how gender discrimination is at the heart of the appalling conditions faced by these women.

Finally, we participated in the ESCR-Net regional conference and training in Bulgaria on women’s ESC rights.

**United Nations Institutional Strengthening**

Our Geneva office also worked on institutional issues, particularly relating to the treaty body strengthening process and the election of treaty body members. Specifically, we worked with the Geneva-based NGO group on treaty bodies and we campaigned for a much greater gender balance on the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights during the April elections.

**Human Rights Council in 2016**

At the Human Rights Council in 2016, we have advocated for language to improve the protection of ESC rights in resolutions on the right to adequate housing, the right to work, the resolution on ESC rights, the right to education and the rights to water and sanitation. To underline the dire situation with respect to homelessness and the need for greater attention on this issue, we hosted a side event at the March Human Rights Council, together with the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing and the OHCHR, which heard moving testimony from a Brazilian housing rights advocate who had formerly been homeless. We also presented on another panel discussion, together with the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and the Ambassador of Sierra Leone, at a side event at the June Council session which asked the provocative question: Are ESC rights marginalized?

**Climate Change and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

Climate change was also a significant focus of the work of the Geneva office of GIESCR. Since 2016 saw the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the COP22, a number of human rights mechanisms pursued initiatives tackling how climate change impacts human rights and civil society also strategized about how to ensure that human rights are taken into account in the operationalization, implementation and monitoring of the Paris Agreement. GI-ESCR made two submissions to CEDAW focusing on women’s land rights and climate change, together with Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development and Landesa Center for Women’s Land Rights. We also participated in the Committee’s formal Discussion on ‘gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change’ with the aim of influencing the Committee’s forthcoming General Recommendation on this topic. A similar process was followed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and we also made a submission, together with Our Children’s Trust, and participated in the Day of Discussion.

**Facilitating Access for Human Rights Defenders**

A critical part of our work from Geneva is acting as a bridge between those working on ESC rights outside Geneva and the various human rights mechanisms in Geneva. To this end, we spend considerable time and effort assisting partner NGOs to engage with the human rights mechanisms in Geneva (treaty bodies, special procedures and UPR, Human Rights Council). For instance, we have supported NGO colleagues from Brazil, Pakistan, Nepal, Kenya, Philippines, Uganda, the United Kingdom, Burundi and Australia to identify opportunities for engagement with the human rights mechanisms, to participate in meetings and conferences and to come to Geneva to undertake advocacy with relevant stakeholders and mechanisms and ensure that the voice of rights holders is heard in Geneva.

We also publish regular updates on the work of the human rights mechanisms as they relate to ESC rights and disseminate information and highlight opportunities for engagement. For instance, we publish a CESCR Update and Human Rights Council Update and we blogged about the new CESCR General Comment on the right to just and favorable conditions of work published in April this year.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

An emerging area of work for the Geneva office is how the Geneva-based human rights mechanisms can interact with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and processes in order to encourage implementation of the SDGs in a manner
compliant with human rights standards. We commenced this project by hosting, together with ATD 4th World and Francis-
cans International, an NGO meeting to map initiatives and brain storm strategies for ensuring the centrality of human rights in SDGs implementation and monitoring and review. In 2017 we would like to build on these initial steps by pushing for positive regular interaction between the Human Rights Council and the 2030 Agenda’s High Level Political Forum and by focusing on how CESCR can best contribute to ESC rights friendly SDG implementation by States. A key pillar of our work in this area is to emphasize the distinction between, and complementarity of, ESC rights and development.
6. Partnerships and Networks

The Global Initiative is proud to actively participate in several networks, including:

- Bringing Human Rights Home: ESC Rights Working Group
- ESCR-Net Adjudication Working Group
- ESCR-Net Social Movement Working Group
- ESCR-Net Strategic Litigation Initiative
- ESCR-Net Women and ESC Rights Working Group
- ETO Consortium World Bank/IMF Focal Point Working Group
- Extra-Territorial Obligations Consortium
- Geneva Climate Change Consultation Group
- Geneva Gender Network
- Geneva Group of Friends of ESCR
- NGO Treaty Body Strengthening Group
- Privatization in Education and Human Rights Consortium
- U.S. Human Rights Network
- World Bank and Human Rights Affinity Group
## 7. Financial Report

### 2016 Unaudited Financial Statement

*items in blue represent funds/grants carried over from 2015*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant:</th>
<th>Anon 1</th>
<th>Anon 2</th>
<th>Anon 3</th>
<th>AUS 1</th>
<th>AUS 2</th>
<th>PERI 3</th>
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<td>1,187</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>27,094</td>
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<td>PERI 3</td>
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\[325,000+unspent balances of Anon 1 & 2\]

### Staff Costs

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### Project Costs

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### Partnerships

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### Office Support / Overhead

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### Remaining Unspent Balance

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### Notes

- *unspent balance merged with Anon 3 income*
- *unspent balance merged with PERI 5 income*
- *rollover into 2017*

### Status of Grant

- Anon 1: closed
- Anon 2: open
- Anon 3: closed
- AUS 1: closed
- AUS 2: closed
- PERI 3: closed
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<th>OSF (Mombasa)</th>
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Rollover into 2017

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Reserves
Please email us at:
globalinitiative
@globalinitiative-
escr.org

Geneva Office:
Global Initiative for
Economic, Social and
Cultural Rights
c/o International
Service for Human
Rights
Rue de Varembe 1
P.O. Box 16
CH-1211 Geneva 20
CIC
Switzerland

United States Office:
Global Initiative for
Economic, Social and
Cultural Rights
8 N. 2nd Avenue
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