

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



Photo credit: GPE/Kelley Lynch, Mauritania, November 2017

2018 Annual Report



The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

2018 Annual Report



We Are The Global Initiative For Economic,
Social And Cultural Rights

WE USE A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK TO ADVANCE NEW FRONTIERS IN
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS.

Message from the Co-Directors

2018 was a great year of growth and innovation for the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR). This report outlines our key activities and areas of work in 2018, including achievements made with respect to each of the following:

- Advocating for the right to social security in the context of unpaid work and gender discrimination;
- Ensuring that systemic violations of economic, social and cultural rights (ESC rights) were addressed within the context of emerging international standards on the right to life;
- Highlighting the links between climate change and women's rights to land and productive resources;
- Ensuring that women in Africa have the same rights as men to land and property in case of separation, divorce or annulment of marriage;
- Facilitating the development process for the human rights guiding principles on States' obligations regarding private actors in education;
- Advocating for strong international standards on the regulation of private education providers, to address the negative impacts of the commercialisation of education;
- Working to increase the visibility of the ESC rights work of international human rights mechanisms, to ensure that the voices of rights holders and advocates are heard in these international processes, and that States prevent Transnational Corporations (TNCs) from violating rights abroad and hold them accountable when violations occur;

- Working to re-energise the right to adequate housing in international human rights mechanisms and debates and to focus attention, and build political commitment, for the realisation of the right to adequate housing on the ground; and,
- Seeking to influence States to employ greater ambition in their climate and energy policies and ensure that those policies are based on human rights.

Two other achievements were especially notable in 2018. First, we published our [Yearbook on the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (CESCR). With a welcome message from the 2018 Chair of the Committee, Ms Maria Virginia Bras Gomes, this on-line publication provides information and analysis of the work of the Committee during 2017. With this inaugural edition of our Yearbook, we hope to provide advocates, activists, and others with concise information summarising the Committee's 2017 accomplishments. The Committee is a premier international human rights institution, charged with the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which has been ratified by 168 countries. Its decisions, Concluding Observations and General Comments provide authoritative interpretation of the treaty and clarify the nature of State party obligations. We hope you find the Yearbook informative and useful, and we look forward to producing future editions in the coming years.

Second, we also launched our brand [new website](#). It is a tremendous improvement over the old website, which had been with us since our founding and which we had thankfully outgrown. The new website captures both our work and our spirit, and enables us to better share with others our ongoing contributions in the field of ESC rights.

With the help and support of our wonderful team, Board of Directors, donors, and partners around the world, we are so pleased with how the GI-ESCR has evolved over the years. Our commitments to advancing protection and enjoyment of ESC rights in tangible ways, and to doing that work in meaningful partnership, has motivated our approach to GI-ESCR's work over the years. Since we began, we have had a chance to partner with many of you on specific projects and initiatives, and we have been immensely grateful for those partnerships, and for the opportunity to engage in this work collectively and collaboratively.

2018 was also a pivotal year for us personally. After founding GI-ESCR nearly ten years ago, and having had the privilege of being its first Co-Directors, in 2018 we decided the time was right to bring on new leadership. We announced to the Board, our staff and donors our intention to step down from our positions, and to help the organisation recruit a new Director to lead the organisation and bring it to its next stage of growth.

It is an exciting time for us, and for the organisation. We believe that new leadership will bring new skills, new perspectives, and healthy change. We want sincerely to thank all of those we've worked with over the many years, including our dedicated Board and team at GI-ESCR. We would not overstate it by saying that being able to do this work has been one of the highlights of our lives, both before and after we founded the

GI-ESCR. We look forward to seeing the organisation continue to grow, to contribute and to offer the world an alternative vision of what we can achieve together through mutual cooperation and commitment to human rights.



Mayra Gomez Bret Thiele

Mayra Gomez and Bret Thiele, Co-Executive Directors
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



Message from the Board of Directors

As the GI-ESCR begins to transition to the next phase of its organisational development, we'd like to first take this opportunity to thank Mayra and Bret for all their dedication and work that helped create the foundation for what is now a well respected human rights organisation that continues innovative, impressive, and impactful work. Founding and starting an organisation takes commitment, vision and drive, and Mayra and Bret have each brought to the organisation their deep personal experience in ESC rights, as well as their own unique substantive areas of expertise. Together, they have shaped the direction and content of the work, but also the work culture of the organisation. The ways in which GI-ESCR seeks to play a dynamic role which embodies simultaneously an attitude of humility and openness to genuine partnership, along with strong strategic and substantive competence, reflects their leadership and approach. GI-ESCR will surely miss them, but we are certain that their vision will live on and grow in the years to come.

As GI-ESCR steps into the future, we know that our mission is more important than ever. We live in a world of increasing inequality, climate crisis and widespread and systemic violations of ESC rights. While no one organisation can address the entirety of humanity's current crisis, what organisations can do – and what GI-ESCR does – is to hold fast to a vision, to make visible the injustices in our world by holding powerful actors accountable for their abuses and failures, and to articulate in urgent ways a compelling global paradigm based on human rights. We believe in the power of the human rights framework to effect positive change and we are pleased that GI-ESCR has grown steadily since its inception and today is an active and important organisation working to advance ESC rights globally. From climate change to privatisation of social services, from strategic litigation and legal advocacy to women's equality, we hope that the success stories and achievements shared in this Annual Report help to contribute to a world where ESC rights, and indeed all human rights, are realised for all people.

As 2018 drew to a close, and with the transition to a new Executive Director to happen in 2019, the Board continues to lead the transition process and looks forward to working with new leadership in order to ensure solid organisational health. The Board is committed to retaining the dynamic, respectful, and independent culture of the organisation, and looks forward to guiding our team into this next exciting chapter.

Board of Directors

Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Lilian Chenwi, Johannesburg (South Africa)

Ellen Dorsey (Chair of the Board), Washington, DC (USA)

Paul J. Nelson (Secretary), Pittsburgh, PA (USA)

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1. Introduction

GI-ESCR seeks to advance the realisation of ESC rights throughout the world, tackling the endemic problem of global poverty and social injustice through a human rights lens. GI-ESCR began in 2010 and is a registered non-profit organisation (501(c)3) in the United States, and currently has offices in Geneva, Switzerland; Nairobi, Kenya; Dakar, Senegal; and Duluth (MN), USA. It also maintains Consultative Status with the United Nations and Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). It is governed by an international Board of Directors, whose 6 members play a fiduciary role (stewardship of tangible assets), a strategic role (strategic partnership with management), and a generative role (source of leadership for organisation). In the time since its inception, GI-ESCR has provided vital technical support and achieved groundbreaking outcomes that are respected within and beyond the human rights community. As a result, it has become increasingly recognised as a leader in the area of ESC rights advocacy and litigation.

This report highlights the Global Initiative's key activities in 2018 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

Extra territorial Obligation (ETOs) increasingly entrenched in human rights norms



The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Working Paper

Human Rights Law Sources:

**UN Pronouncements
on
Extra-Territorial Obligations**

Concluding Observations
General Comments and Recommendations

Special Procedures

UPR Recommendations

July 2018

Our work on ETOs during 2018 continued to ensure that ETOs are increasingly monitored by treaty bodies as a matter of routine, including the Human Rights Committee; the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The resulting Concluding Observations on ETOs attained through the parallel reporting process laid the foundation for strong ETO language being included in several recently adopted General Comments and General Recommendation, including General Comment No. 36 on the right to life adopted by the Human Rights Committee; General Comment No. 24 on businesses and human rights was adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and General Recommendations No. 34 on rural women and No. 35 on gender-based violence against women adopted by CEDAW.

Results are periodically published in our [Working Paper on UN pronouncements related to ETOs](#) which is disseminated widely amongst advocates and practitioners around the world.

Systemic social rights violations recognised by the UN Human Rights Committee

GI-ESCR led [advocacy](#) to ensure the recently adopted General Comment No. 36 on the right to life under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) included addressing systemic violations of certain aspects indivisible with social rights, including homelessness and denial of access to health care, food, water, and sanitation.

The General Comment embraces a more fulsome understanding of the right to life and insists on the entitlement of individuals to enjoy a “*life with dignity*” (para 3). In a strong endorsement of the indivisibility of all rights, the new General Comment also discusses the economic and social dimensions of the right to life, and the implications for the right to life of environmental degradation, climate change and sustainable development. Taken together, these represent significant developments in human rights jurisprudence and an expansion of opportunities for access to justice for millions of people living in poverty, given the special, non-derogable, status of the right to life and the wide ratification of the ICCPR and its Optional Protocol.

Importantly, this broad definition of the right to life is considered justiciable under the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. Earlier drafts of the General Comment attempted to limit justiciability, for example by requiring individuals to establish that their individual rights had been “*directly violated*” by acts or omissions of States or were under “*a real and personalised risk of being violated.*”

The final text solidifies a long-term goal of the ESC rights movement; to ensure that individual complaints dealing with social aspects of civil and political rights are legally enforceable against the 116 States that are party to the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR. The General Comment also has important implications for the justiciability and enforceability of ESC rights issues at the domestic level, with a significant number of States enshrining the right to life in national laws and constitutions.

The other ground-breaking aspect of the General Comment, is its recognition that environmental degradation and climate change constitute “*some of the most pressing and serious threats to the ability of present and future generations to enjoy the right to life.*” The relationship between the right to life and environmental degradation



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UN Human Rights Committee brings new vitality to the right to life

Through its expanding jurisprudence on the right to life, the UN Human Rights Committee has given advocates on economic and social rights a powerful new enforcement tool.

By: Lucy McKernan & Bret Thiele
February 13, 2019

Available in:
Español



and climate change was not addressed in the previous General Comments on the right to life, nor has it been commonly addressed in the Committee's recommendations to States. The new General Comment, however, says: "*States must adopt measures to preserve the environment and protect it against harm, pollution and climate change caused by public and private actors*" (para 62).

Our [article](#) on the Open Global Rights website explained how, through its expanding jurisprudence on the right to life, the Human Rights Committee has given advocates for economic and social rights a powerful new enforcement tool. We now plan to leverage this outcome through the State reporting procedure of the Human Rights Committee, by bringing before the Committee, violations of the right to life based on economic, social and environmental issues.

[Right to social security in the context of gender and unpaid work upheld by the UN Committee on ESC Rights](#)

GI-ESCR assisted with [a third party intervention](#) along with partners within the ESCR-Net Strategic Litigation Working Group and the ESCR-Net Women and ESCR Working Group intervention before the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in relation to *MCTC v Ecuador*, a case dealing with the right to social security in the context of unpaid work and gender discrimination.

Relying on our input, the Committee found a violation of Article 9 (right to social security) and Articles 2(2) (prohibition on discrimination) and 3 (equal right of men and women to enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights) in conjunction with Article 9.

Our successful arguments included that:

1. States parties must ensure that existing social security systems are enjoyed without discrimination, including for women who undertake unpaid care work.
2. States parties should take positive measures to ensure social security protections for persons unable to access or benefit from existing social security systems, particularly for older women.
3. States parties must ensure that existing social security systems facilitate access to information and are subject to due process, including the right to an effective remedy.

The Committee's decision urged Ecuador, as a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to grant the woman the benefits she is entitled to as part of her right to a pension, or other social security benefits enabling her to have an adequate and dignified standard of living. The Committee also urged Ecuador to adopt legislative and administrative measures to ensure, to the maximum of its available resources, that similar situations do not occur in the future. Ecuador is now has six months to ensure that Ms. Trujillo Calero receives her social security and change policies to benefit all similarly situation women.

See the Committee's [press release](#), which also links to the full decision.



Photo credit: Niel Palmer / CIAT, Kenya

3. Advocating for Women's Rights to Land and other Productive Resources

In many parts of the world, women's basic rights to land and productive resources continue to be systematically denied. They are denied in law, but even more so in practice, leaving women dependent almost entirely upon the men in their lives for their most basic economic survival. Women's inability to access, use and control land productive resources on an equal basis with men entrenches women's poverty, but it also reinforces gender inequality and relegates women to a subjugated position within their families, communities and societies – both socially and economically.

GI-ESCR works to consolidate, strengthen and advance a progressive framework related to economic, social and cultural rights. Our work builds upon past successes to continually advance women's rights by strengthening the normative framework protecting these rights, with a particular focus on Africa, and prioritises partnership with national civil society organisations in achievement of goals.

Our work in this area focuses specifically on: (1) Utilising strategic spaces at international and regional levels to advance these rights, namely the human rights treaty bodies of the United Nations and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR); (2) Strengthening partnerships and networks working on these issues, particularly between international and national organisations, including by continuing ongoing strategic discussions and partnerships between key actors and organisations working on these issues; (3) Highlighting the relevance of women's land rights in international discourse, particularly related to housing, the rights of rural women, climate change, food and nutrition security, sustainable development and other relevant issues; and (4) Contributing to the creation of new human rights standards on these issues.

UN Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights

In 2018 we intervened with the UN Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights to inform his thematic report to the General Assembly on the [impact of economic reforms and austerity measures on women's human rights](#). Our original submission and subsequent input included information on women's rights to land and productive resources. These themes were reflected in his [final report](#) (paras 43 and 90), where the Independent Expert highlighted that *“The lack of security of tenure over land used to sustain livelihoods has important implications for the enjoyment of the right to food and housing, especially in terms of access and availability, while also putting those women at risk of eviction and dispossession. One of the results of economic reforms and rising food and fuel prices has been an increase in large-scale land acquisitions. Because women make up the majority of the world's small farmers, such acquisitions make their situation even more precarious, either further depriving them of access to land or making their rights over land less secure.”*

Climate change and women's rights to land and productive resources



With our partner Landesa, GI-ESCR submitted a [Written Submission](#) in Response to a Questionnaire in relation to Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/38/4 on human rights and climate change. In our submission we noted that gender-equal land rights are a critical missing piece in climate change strategies at global, national, and local levels. Land literally underlies climate change impacts, both environmental and human—and women's human rights are impacted most negatively and severely; and conversely, land is essential to key interventions to mitigate climate change. But land is often overlooked in global conversations about climate change, even when agriculture, forests, and land degradation (all arenas inextricably tied to land) are centrally featured in these same conversations. And women are often absent or marginalised in global, national, and local-level decision-making spaces where climate change interventions related to land are conceptualised, designed, and adopted, despite the key roles they play in sustainable land and natural resource management. Directing resources to strengthening women's rights to land and women's participation in land governance

is a strategic strategy to simultaneously address climate change and its impacts, and to achieve gender equality. Our submission further highlighted that:

- In regions of the world most affected by climate change, women bear the brunt of increased natural disasters, displacement, unpredictable rain fall, decreased food production, and increased hunger and poverty.
- When women hold secure rights to land, efforts to tackle climate change are more successful, and responsibilities and benefits associated with climate change response programs are more equitably distributed.
- Human rights bodies have called for a gender-responsive approach to land management and land rights in climate change interventions related to mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency.
- Participation is a central theme related to gender, climate change and land. Women are often absent from national decision-making spaces related to land management and governance, and this includes decisions about climate change interventions.
- Women are effective land managers. Where women have secure rights to use and access land, evidence suggests that they use resources sustainably.

The [final report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) reflected our input and contained a standalone section on food security and access to land (see paras 6-8). In fact, in the text of the report the OHCHR gave a public nod to our advocacy work, highlighting in para 58:

“The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and partners engaged with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the Committee’s reviews of Maldives and Tuvalu to highlight exclusion of women from formal decision-making on climate change and discrimination with respect to land rights. In both cases, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women emphasized the importance of ensuring women’s rights to participation in climate change policy, in disaster management and in natural resource governance. This type of engagement with human rights mechanisms can trigger recommendations and government action, and also supported the elaboration of the Committee’s general recommendation No. 37.”

Also on the theme of climate change and women’s land rights, in 2018 International Women’s Day was marked by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with the adoption of a General Recommendation on disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change. The General Recommendation (GR 37) is the first interpretative guidance issued by a United Nations human rights treaty body to support States parties to understand and act on, the gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change. GR 37 calls on States to integrate a gender perspective within climate change and disaster risk reduction programs, to guarantee women’s equality, sustainable socio-economic development and climate resilience.

GR 37 incorporated our specific feedback on women’s land rights and stated that:

...

To ensure substantive equality between women and men in the context of disaster risk reduction and climate change, States parties should take specific, targeted and measurable steps: (a) To identify and eliminate all forms of discrimination, including intersecting forms of discrimination, against women in legislation, policies, programmes, plans and other activities relating to disaster risk reduction and climate change. Priority should be accorded to addressing discrimination in relation to the ownership, access, use, disposal, control, governance and inheritance of property, land and natural resources, (at para 31).

For more information, please see GI-ESCR’s [first](#) and [second](#) written submissions with Landesa and APWLD informing this process.

Advocacy before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

We have worked for several years with our partners, including IGED-Africa, to place women's land rights on the agenda of the ACHPR and to encourage the adoption of specific regional standards on these issues. In 2018 we succeeded in having the ACHPR adopt [a resolution](#) affirming its intention to elaborate a General Comment on Article 7(d) of the Maputo Protocol, on 'equitable share.' This is a goal on which we have been working with partners since 2013, and we hope that the General Comment will be adopted in 2019.

In its resolution, the ACHPR expressed concern *“that lack of access to land and other productive resources continue to have a negative impact on the enjoyment of various human rights for women” and that “some countries maintain regressive standards when it comes to defining ‘equitable share,’ such that women are not able to enjoy equal property rights upon separation, divorce or annulment of a marriage.”* It further noted that *“women’s access to, use of and control over land and other productive resources are essential to ensuring their right to equality and to an adequate standard of living,”* and that there is a *“need to clarify various legal issues pertaining to women’s property rights and equality in marriage, particularly in cases of separation, divorce or annulment of a marriage; including clarity on the legal obligations of States so as to establish a continent-wide standard based on human rights principles.”* The ACHPR decided to elaborate General Comments on Article 7 (d) of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa, which requires State Parties to enact appropriate legislation to ensure that women and men enjoy the same rights in case of separation, divorce or annulment of marriage, and that women and men shall have the right to an equitable sharing of the joint property deriving from the marriage in such circumstances. It also decided to collaborate with relevant stakeholders working on issues of land and property rights in the drafting of the General Comments.

Collective strategising on women’s rights to land and productive resources

We seek a strengthened and more consolidated and coordinated movement to advance women's rights to land and productive resources at international and regional levels. This work therefore focuses on strengthening and deepening partnerships between organisations engaging in this area of work, including women in Africa organising through legal networks, as well as with international organisations active on these issues. Such organisations include the International Land Coalition (ILC), Landesa, ESCR-Net, ActionAid, FAO, UN-Women, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), among others. To achieve this goal, it is also important to connect with actors working in various issue areas, such as housing, rural women, climate change, food and nutrition security, sustainable development, etc., in order to ensure the visibility of women's rights to land and productive resources.

In 2018 we co-facilitated a collective strategising call on women's rights to land and productive resources. GI-ESCR participated along with IGED-Africa, ILSA, Landesa, and ILC. The call provided an opportunity to discuss potential opportunities for joint advocacy at the UN and ACHPR.

Further, within the ESCR-Net Steering Committee on Women & ESC rights, GI-ESCR plays a key role on women's rights to land and productive resources. In 2018, a webinar was held within the working group to discuss a network-wide campaigning theme, looking at women's rights to land and productive resources

Assessing implementation of CEDAW Concluding Observations on Kenya

From our considerable success in gaining progressive pronouncements on women's rights to land and productive resources, particularly within the context of UN treaty body reviews, we have a keen interest in understanding the ways in which Concluding Observations are or are not implemented at the domestic level, and the barriers to implementation. To further our understanding of implementation at the national level, we have sought to engage pilot projects, together with partners, to assess the level of implementation on key issues of legal reform and policy change.

To begin, in 2018 we began working together with Indiana University (International Law and Institutions Program), FIDA-Kenya, and IANGEL to assess domestic level implementation of CEDAW Concluding Observations relevant to women's land rights in Kenya. Kenya was chosen because of the particularly strong [Concluding Observations from CEDAW](#) on women's land rights in 2017. At the time, GI-ESCR and FIDA-Kenya had submitted a [joint written submission](#) for Kenya's review before CEDAW, highlighting various concerns with respect to the status of women's land and property rights in the country.



The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Shadow Report on Kenya's 8th Periodic Report Scheduled to be reviewed during the
CEDAW Committee's 69th Session, 2017.

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The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights



*Upholding human dignity and advancing justice
Catalysing change from the local to global*

HUMAN RIGHTS GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON STATE OBLIGATIONS REGARDING PRIVATE SCHOOLS



T



PROTECCIÓN ESENCIAL DEL DERECHO DE VIVIR CON DIGNIDAD EN EL DERECHO DE LOS NIÑOS



C

WORLD LEADERSHIP: PROGRESSIVE POLICY AND PRACTICE FOR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS



T



PROTECCIÓN ESENCIAL DEL DERECHO DE VIVIR CON DIGNIDAD EN EL DERECHO DE LOS NIÑOS



Breakthrough Resolution adopted by the European Parliament declared that the European Commission must not use development aid money to fund commercial private schools.

LEARN MORE

www.gi-escr.org/european-parliament-ban

#EducationBeforeProfit



4. Human Rights Impact of Privatisation of Social Rights

GI-ESCR works to deepen the research on the impact of the increasing role of private actors on social services, particularly in education and health, to highlight the obligation of States to respect, protect and fulfil ESC rights, and to offer a thoughtful response to privatisation and its impact on the enjoyment of ESC rights in practice. By strengthening the connections between theory and practice, national and international advocacy, in collaboration and partnerships with a broad range of actors, GI-ESCR advances education and health as a human right in the context of expanding private actor involvement in social services.

Finalising human rights guiding principles on States' obligations regarding private actors in education

GI-ESCR continued work on compiling and clarifying the human rights standards on private involvement in education, as part of the Secretariat facilitating the development process for the human rights guiding principles on States' obligations regarding private actors in education (the [Guiding Principles](#)).

The three-year participatory consultation phase of the Guiding Principles was completed in 2018. In February a [thematic consultation](#) was held in Geneva, in collaboration with the Missions of Finland, France and Portugal, NORRAG and the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. The introductory section of the consultation was livestreamed for broader viewing and is available on the [NORRAG YouTube page](#).

[Community consultations](#) were organised in India, Kenya, Nepal and The Philippines by partner organisations with support from the Secretariat.

Finally, a [global online consultation](#) was launched to reach a wide audience, who may not have otherwise been able to participate in the consultation process. These additional events allowed the Secretariat to collect more information on nuanced areas of the Guiding Principles and engage new audiences to raise awareness about the Guiding Principles, particularly through online promotions and community-level consultations.

The [Drafting Committee](#) for the Guiding Principles was constituted in June 2018 and held [the first in-person meeting](#) in Geneva, Switzerland. Chaired by Professor Ann Skelton, UNESCO Chair in education law in Africa, and comprising of 9 individuals, this group led the drafting process, building on the input from the consultations. Subsequent in-person meetings were held in September and October to review and discuss the structure and comments on the Guiding Principles, in coordination with other experts.

A consultant, Zsuzsanna Nyitray, was hired to work with the Drafting Committee and other global experts to develop a commentary to complement the Guiding Principles. Ms. Nyitray participated in discussions with the Drafting Committee and reviewed source materials to ensure the Guiding Principles were underpinned by firm legal provisions. Once published, the commentary will add to the collection of background papers commissioned to look at various themes addressed by the Guiding Principles. These documents are expected to be finalised and launched in 2019.

The Ministry of Education in Côte d'Ivoire agreed to host the Adoption Conference for the Guiding Principles in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Launching the Guiding Principles outside North America or Europe, in a Francophone country, is in-line with the overall approach to the development process of ensuring broad investment in and ownership of the principles. The adoption conference will take place in February 2019.

[Monitoring concerning developments of commercial low-cost private schools](#)

GI-ESCR has continued to actively research and monitor global development and impact of commercial low-cost private school chains on the provision of education. A key focus in 2018 continued to be the operations and actions of Bridge International Academies (BIA).

Following the [decision](#) of the Government of Uganda to close BIA schools in the country, GI-ESCR joined other [civil society organizations called](#) on the company to comply with the Government decision and stop undermining the right to education. This call came after a [letter](#) on 29 January 2018 from the Government of Uganda warning the company that its schools would not be allowed to operate in the 2018 academic year.

BIA filed a case before the Ugandan High Court challenging this directive, but in a [ruling](#) delivered in March 2018, the High Court dismissed the application, observing that the schools were indeed operating illegally.

In Kenya, the High Court of Kenya [dismissed](#) an application for an interim injunction against the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and its Secretary General Mr Wilson Sossion, which had temporarily barred them from publicly discussing the operations of BIA, pending a hearing and final determination on a suit. This ruling was an important step to correct the attempt by the company to silence critics in the country.

Following repeated efforts to highlight concerns about the impact of BIA's activities, the Kenyan-based organisation East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights) and eight Kenyan citizens submitted a [complaint](#) to the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman, the independent complaint mechanism of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in April, with the support of GI-ESCR and RESULTS Educational Fund. See below section for further details on the CAO complaint.

Additionally, a [call to BIA investors](#) was issued by GI-ESCR and 88 civil society organisations in March, to cease their support to the company, including investments via intermediaries, and to fully discharge their legal due diligence obligations and responsibilities by making no further financing commitments to BIA. A follow-up [blog post](#) was issued in response to BIA's reaction.

Further to actively monitoring developments, GI-ESCR has also worked with partner organisations to map the various accountability mechanisms, at the international and national levels, available to hold both public and private actors to account for their support for ongoing violations of the right to education. These options will be further explored in 2019.

- Complaint to the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) of the International Finance Corporation (IFC)



GI-ESCR worked with RESULTS Educational Fund to support EACHRights to develop and submit a [complaint](#) to the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO), the independent accountability mechanism of the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The complaint highlights the various documented violations committed by [Bridge International Academies](#) and calls on the CAO to carry out a compliance review of the company, and recommend that the IFC withdraw its investment and implement mechanisms to ensure that no further support is granted to companies that violate

national laws and human rights.

The complaint was found to be [admissible in June 2018](#), and the CAO conducted field visits in September to investigate the claims brought forth in the complaint. In December, the CAO shared their assessment report

for a final review by all parties, before publishing it on their website. GI-ESCR, RESULTS provided EACHRights with comments for feedback. These were sent to the CAO. The final report should be publicly available on the CAO website in early 2019.

Advocacy with international institutions

GI-ESCR has strategically leveraged several global institutions and United Nations mechanisms to ensure the human rights normative framework addresses the issue of low-fee private schools' impact on the provision of education.

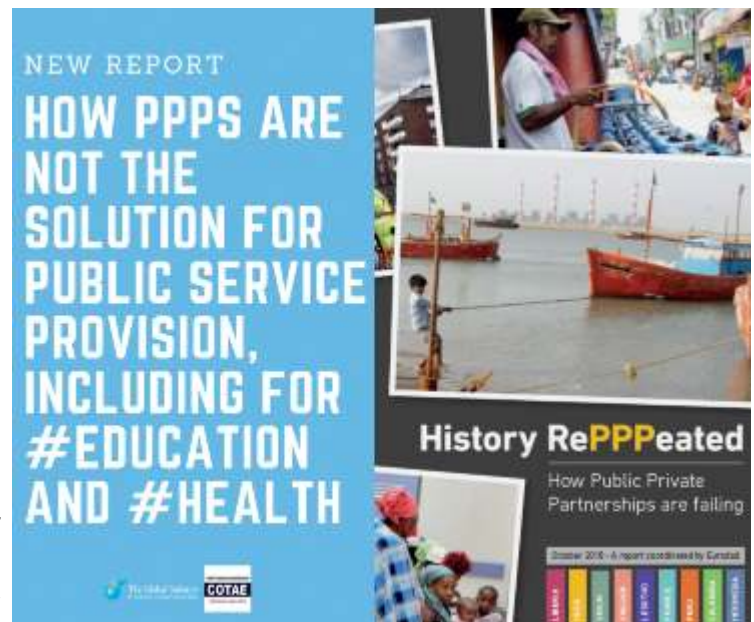
- European Parliament

A crucial precedent was set with a breakthrough [resolution](#) by the European Parliament which declared that the European Commission must not use development aid money to fund commercial private schools. The resolution was adopted in November, by over 90% of the votes. It considers that it is a requirement under human rights law and a necessity for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals that the European Union refrain from funding commercial private schools. [GI-ESCR, in a coalition of organisations](#), advocated for the European Parliament to recognise that the fast-pace growth of private actors in education in developing countries could undermine the progress in building non-discriminatory, free public education systems.

- World Bank

GI-ESCR, with partners RESULTS, Global Partnership for Education and Oxfam, attended a series of meetings with World Bank Executive Directors during the Spring Meetings in April to present the complaint submitted to the CAO, as well as updated information on correspondence with other investors and BIA.

For the World Bank annual meeting in October, GI-ESCR contributed a case study on the Liberian education public-private partnership (PPP) programme for a new [Eurodad report](#) on PPPs. The report highlighted the dangers of using PPPs for public service provision, including education and health. GI-ESCR supported the collective advocacy and communications for the report launch.



- UN Human Rights Council resolution on right to education

GI-ESCR participated in the negotiations on the right to education resolution, during the 38th session of the Human Rights Council held in June. The resulting [resolution](#) contains strong language on the regulation of private education providers, to address the negative impacts of the commercialisation of education.

The resolution, was adopted without the need for a vote, highlighting the increased consensus among States regarding the human rights requirement to regulate education providers and to address the negative impacts of commercialisation in education. It also welcomed the development of the Guiding Principles as part of the steps to implement the right to education. This reflects the support from States for processes such as ongoing efforts to develop [Guiding Principles](#).

- African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR)

Following an open call by the ACHPR, GI-ESCR made a [submission](#) on the draft guidelines on the right to water in Africa. The submission focused on the provision in the draft guidelines addressing the delegation of water service to private actors and drew largely from the Human Rights Guiding Principles on the role of States with respect to private actors.



GI-ESCR worked with ISER and the Dullah Omar Institute to prepare for a [side event](#) (pictured right) on privatisation of social services, especially education and health, at the ACHPR session in October, and worked with these partners and in partnership with the Commissioner head of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights working group, on the adoption of a resolution on private actors and social services.

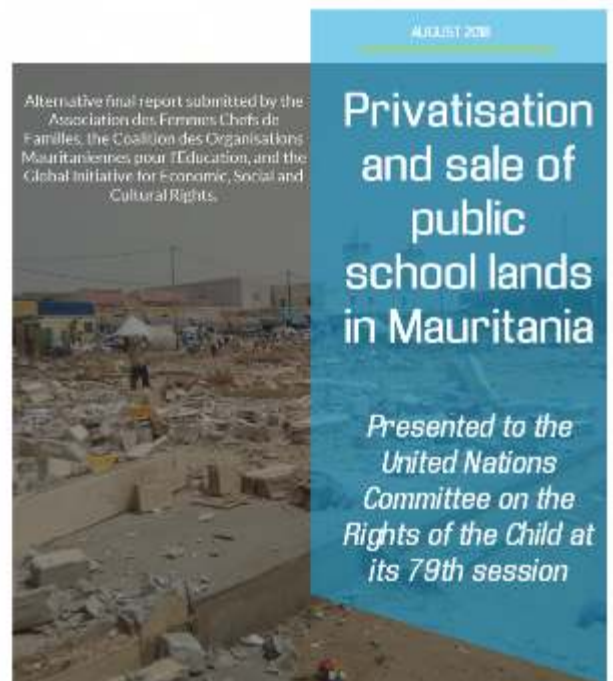
- Examination of Mauritania by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child



GI-ESCR, the Association of Women Head of Families (AFCF), and the coalition of Mauritanian organisations for education (COMEDUC) [submitted a report](#) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the privatisation of education in Mauritania and the selling of public school lands, following a [one-year research project](#).

The report and the issues it tackles were presented to the Committee during the pre-session and Mauritania’s final examination at the Committee on the Rights of the Child, by a representatives from AFCF and GI-ESCR.

The final [recommendations](#) on Mauritania by the CRC, expressed deep concern regarding privatisation of education in Mauritania and the closure of public schools



in the capital, and noted all key issues raised in the report submitted by GI-ESCR and partners.

Global mobilisation on private actors in education

An integral approach in GI-ESCR's work on private actors and social services is to connect, network and collaborate with different partners operating across geographies to be able to address global issues. Throughout the year, GI-ESCR participated in various conferences and networks to ensure a human rights framework in strategic discussions on private actors' involvement in education.

- Global Partnership for Education

GI-ESCR participated in the [Global Partnership for Education replenishment conference](#) in Dakar, Senegal in February 2018. At the conference, GI-ESCR co-organised a panel session on "[Accountable financing: what does supporting education as an accountable human right involve?](#)" The session explored accountability in the realisation of the right to education, from the perspectives of civil society, UN experts, States/inter-state agency. The focus was on the importance and meaning of accountability for the right to education, and practical tools that States and the GPE could use to concretely participate to improve public education systems and collaborative work.

A concerning development over the year has been the private sector strategy of the GPE. GI-ESCR has actively participated in the discussion and attended the GPE Board meeting in Brussels as observers to advocate for a human rights approach to be incorporated in the strategy, in accordance with the human rights Guiding Principles on State obligations regarding private actors involved in education.

GI-ESCR also held a knowledge share presentation at the Global Partnership for Education in Washington, DC in April. The presentation went over the Guiding Principles on Private actors in Education. Key members of management were in attendance for the presentation.

- ESCR-Net Economic Policy Working Group

Working collaboratively at the global level, GI-ESCR participated in the ESCR-Net Economic Policy Working Group met in Tunis, Tunisia. The focus was to deepen a shared analysis of the global economic system and related development model, to popularise human-rights based responses and develop advocacy positions on systemic injustices, to refine collective plans to articulate and promote alternative(s), and to establish plans in relation to concrete openings for advocacy and campaigning.

- CIES Conference

At the Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education (CIES) in Mexico City, 25-29 March, GI-ESCR held a pre-conference workshop "[Privatisation has failed: How can public education systems be fixed?](#)" exploring concepts and models of accountability and transparency in education, and two conference panel sessions. The first panel, "[Privatisation in Education in Francophone countries: a separate case?](#)", looked at privatisation of education in the Francophone area, with the presentation of the particular cases of Mauritania and Haiti, as well as the role of international donors and the presentation of the Francophone network against commercialisation of education. The second panel, "[Are Public-Private Partnerships in Education Acceptable from a Human Rights Perspective?](#)" facilitated a discussion on public-private

partnerships, which opened a space to also discuss the Guiding Principles. An exhibition table showcasing GI-ESCR's work on privatisation and social services was available throughout the conference.

- Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI)

GI-ESCR, in partnership with EACHRights, ISER and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) hosted a Special Interest Group at the annual Regional Education and Learning Initiative (RELI) Regional Convening in Dar es Salaam held in June 2018. The event highlighted the challenges with private actors in education, State obligations and alternatives and solutions including the Guiding Principles and social accountability.

GI-ESCR is also part of the Equity and Inclusion thematic group which carried forward the work on exploring effective models for social accountability in education.

Privatisation of health and other social services

GI-ESCR continues to expand the work on privatisation of health, unpacking the human rights framework applicable to the involvement of private actors in health, building from the experience in education. GI-ESCR [partnered](#) with ISER-Uganda, Oxfam Great Britain (Oxfam GB) and the University of Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic to develop an in-depth understanding of the human rights framework applicable to the involvement of private actors in health care, including State obligations where private actors are involved in the health system. This paper is due to be published in 2019.

GI-ESCR in collaboration with ISER and with support from Oxfam GB developed a [research tool](#) that could be used in researching or analysing the impact of private actor involvement in health systems and on the right to health. ISER piloted this research tool in their investigation on the human rights impact of public private partnerships in health will be published in 2019.

For the Fifth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in October, GI-ESCR in collaboration with Essex Human Rights Clinic, Oxfam and ISER submitted an abstract on “The role and limitation of private actors in the realisation of SDG 3 and the right to health”. The abstract was accepted as a [poster](#) presentation, which focused on how to measure the impact of private actors on the right to health.

GI-ESCR also attended the first East African Governance for health convening, that was organised by Open Society in East Africa and the Open Society Foundation Public Health Program. Building on this and the experience in education, GI-ESCR is working with a few partners to develop basic conceptual tools to address the role of private actors in health from a human rights angle.

GI-ESCR also published the first version of the synthesis of human rights bodies' [statements on private actors in health systems](#).

GI-ESCR participated in a panel discussion on private actors and the right to health during the 5th Annual Conference on ESCRs held in Kampala, Uganda to exchange experiences working on private actors in health systems internationally, and to discuss the implications for health governance in Uganda.

Private actors in education in Francophone countries



#rethinkeducation #reviewofeducation
NOUVEAU: Rapport sur la Privatisation et Marchandisation de l'Éducation en Mauritanie

GI-ESCR and its Mauritanian partners were able to produce the first research ever on privatisation of education in Mauritania. A joint report on Mauritania was submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The final report was launched in December. It calls for supporting the denunciation of the closure of public schools in the capital Nouakchott and calls on the Mauritanian government to uphold the right to education. The CRC

issued the Concluding Observations which included language reflecting the recommendations presented in the joint report. The report is available in [French, English and Arabic](#). A [video](#) was also created to promote the launch of the report. It is also in multiple languages on the [GI-ESCR Youtube Channel](#).

GI-ESCR worked in coordination with OSIWA at planning its exploratory mission in Western Africa, with the objective of finding new partners in the region, to further the understanding of the situation of privatisation and commercialisation of education in the region and identify opportunities for projects to tackle these issues.

During the [17th Francophonie Summit](#) of 2018, 57 member States of the Francophonie reaffirmed their commitment to quality public education and effective regulation of education, including private, thus responding to the call of the Francophone Network against commercialisation of education.

GI-ESCR and the six other members of the Francophone Network Consortium Steering Committee were able through the work with COSYDEP, and a Southern based intern Francophone Network coordinator, put in place the foundation for transferring part of the lead in the work in the Francophone area to the South, and to assess necessary steps in moving forward with this work.



GI-ESCR Staff and partners participate at the UN Human Rights Council Session in Geneva, June 2018

5. Additional United Nations Advocacy

ESC rights advocacy with the UN human rights mechanisms

GI-ESCR undertakes advocacy with the UN human rights mechanisms to promote and advance ESC rights and to counter what has been described as the 'marginalisation of economic, social and cultural rights.' To this end, we advocate for the realisation of ESC rights, at the Human Rights Council (pictured right), with its Special Procedures mechanisms, with the Human Rights Treaty Bodies and with the Office for the Human Rights Commissioner for Human Rights.

In 2018, this work included advocacy on the many ESC rights resolutions of the Human Rights Council, advocating for the recognition



of the economic, social and environmental elements of the right to life, promotion of social protection floors, advocacy on sustainable development, the SDGs and human rights and on the importance of protecting the work of defenders of ESC rights.

Social protection

At the June session of the Human Rights Council, GI-ESCR co-hosted a side event about the role of the International Monetary Fund in social protection systems, which featured Mr Philip Alston, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, discussing his report on this topic.

Development, the SDGs and human rights

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the issue of sustainable development and human rights has received increasing attention in the work of the human rights mechanisms. Given the overlaps and synergies between ESC rights and the SDGs, GI-ESCR has been pressing for more active engagement from the Human Rights Council with the Sustainable Development Agenda to highlight the importance of a rights-based approach to sustainable development. We have continued to follow the developments in this respect in the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies and have reported on them in our regular updates.

In the Human Rights Council, some States have been promoting a concerning narrative that economic development will lead to the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. GI-ESCR has worked with NGO colleagues from ATD 4th World, Franciscans International and the Centre for Economic and Social Rights, to emphasise that economic development is not synonymous with the realisation of ESC rights and to underline States' human rights obligations in the context of development. In response to the call for submissions of the Human Rights Council's Advisory Committee on the topic 'the contribution of development to the realisation of human rights,' we made a joint [submission](#). The submission questioned the premise of the topic, that development is a precondition to the realisation of rights. It pointed out the many examples of human rights abuses in the context of development projects and of countries considered highly 'economically developed' but where serious human rights abuses continue. The submission also insisted on using the language of sustainability, when talking about development, which was agreed by consensus in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

GI-ESCR also participated as an expert in a two-day [Intersessional Expert Meeting](#) on women's rights, gender equality and the Sustainable Development Agenda, convened at the request of the Human Rights Council. Our contribution focused on accountability for the SDGs and for human rights, giving the example of climate change and its impact on women's rights. We also participated in a two-day Expert Meeting on accountability and the rights to water and sanitation, convened by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to water and sanitation, Mr Leo Heller. The purpose of the meeting was to gather in-puts for his [report](#) to the General Assembly on this topic.

Human rights defenders of ESCR

Together with the Legal Resources Centre of South Africa and the International Service for Human Rights, we [urged](#) the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to address the situation of defenders of economic, social and cultural rights, in its review of South Africa. Our report highlighted the harassment of,

and attacks on, those working on economic, social and cultural rights in South Africa, and in particular, defenders of the land and environment. We were very [pleased](#) to see this issue taken up by the Committee both during the dialogue with the State delegation and in its [Concluding Observations](#) on South Africa.

Strengthening human rights mechanisms

Key to the realisation of ESC rights is the effectiveness of the international human rights mechanisms and their accessibility to rights holders and advocates. GI-ESCR works to increase the visibility of the ESC rights work of the international mechanisms, to ensure that the voices of rights holders and advocates are heard in these international processes. There are two main elements to GI-ESCR's work: bridging the gap between Geneva and national ESC rights advocates, by providing advice, support and information to NGO colleagues; strengthening the treaty body system so that it is an effective accountability mechanism for ESC rights holders.

A bridge between Geneva and ESC rights holders and advocates - advice and support to NGOs

In 2018 GI-ESCR continued to prioritise its work to bridge the gap between the Geneva based human rights mechanisms and ESC rights advocates at the national and local levels. One of the ways we do this is by providing information, advice and support to NGO colleagues who wish to engage with those mechanisms. For instance, in 2018 we provided advice to advocates from Israel, South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Indonesia, China, Switzerland and Venezuela, about Committee processes and engagement opportunities, on advocacy strategies when in Geneva and from afar, on submitting Communications under the Optional Protocols, on jurisprudence of the Committees and on engaging in the process for the elaboration of general comments and on engagement in the Human Rights Council.

We provided guidance on avenues for pursuing accountability for rights abuses in relation to the right to work for migrant minors and on extra-territorial corporate abuses of the right to water. We also met with NGO colleagues from Mauritania, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, Australia and Germany who came to Geneva for a treaty body review of their country and sought advocacy advice.

We provided training to students of the Geneva Academy on ESC rights and the international human rights mechanisms and to National Human Rights Institutions staff undertaking training in Geneva with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

Reporting on the ESC rights developments of the human rights mechanisms

To increase the visibility and understanding of the important work of the human rights mechanisms and to ensure that ESC rights advocates are aware of developments and opportunities for engagement, GI-ESCR publishes regular updates on the ESC rights developments and discussions of the Human Rights Council (March, [June](#) & [September](#)) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (March & October). We believe these are the only ESC rights focused regular reports of the Council and the Committee.

We have also continued to monitor the complaints procedure of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to report on jurisprudential developments. We published a [blog](#) about the cases considered by the Committee to date.

A significant achievement this year was the publication of our first [Yearbook on the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (CESCR). With a welcome message from the 2018 Chair of the Committee, Ms Maria



Virginia Bras Gomes, this on-line publication provides information and analysis of the work of the Committee during 2017. It provides information about the three functions of the Committee (State reporting procedure, Communications and Statements and General Comments) and about the Committee members and their working methods. The objective is to give greater visibility to the Committee and its work.

We received very good feedback from Committee members, the CESCR Secretariat and NGO and academic

colleagues. We would like to publish this yearbook annually.

Strengthening the treaty body system: TB-Net

The UN human rights treaty bodies are a crucial part of the international system of accountability for the implementation of States' obligations to realise economic, social and cultural rights. Whilst the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is the most relevant treaty body for ESC rights accountability, the other treaty bodies are also important, for instance by monitoring ESC rights with respect to particular groups. The effectiveness, strength and credibility of the entire treaty body system also impacts each body. For these reasons, GI-ESCR works to ensure that the treaty body system is effective and accessible for rights holders. GI-ESCR is a member of an informal network of NGOs that work closely with each of the treaty bodies, called 'TB-Net.' Together with our TB-Net colleagues we are working to advance 3 initiatives:

- Enhancing the quality, independence and diversity of TB membership, through improving nominations and elections processes.
- Follow-up procedures of the treaty bodies.
- Participation in the 'treaty body strengthening' process.

In pursuit of these initiatives, at the annual treaty body Chairpersons' meeting in New York in May, we worked together to prepare a [submission](#) and an [oral statement](#) to the meeting and a side event in the margins of the meeting. We also made a Joint Statement to the Human Rights Council on elections of treaty body members.

On follow-up, we published a report of the 'Follow-up Retreat' and undertook advocacy with each of the treaty bodies and at the Treaty Body Chairpersons' meeting in May.

In November, we hosted a closed meeting with States to discuss treaty body elections. Switzerland and the UK co-sponsored the meeting. The meeting considered State practice and ideas for reform of the processes for the nomination and election of treaty body members. It was a very successful meeting with States sharing candidly their practices, challenges and ideas on this topic. One State representative described the meeting as the most useful discussion he had had on treaty body elections in his 16 years working on the human rights treaty bodies.

The next step is to see how we can move forward with some of the recommendations of the meeting, working together with States and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Human rights in the context of climate change

Since 2016 GI-ESCR has worked jointly with the Center on International Environmental Law on a project to: influence States to employ greater ambition in their climate and energy policies and ensure that those policies are based on human rights; to deepen the understanding and awareness regarding linkages between human rights and climate change; and to influence the development of human rights jurisprudence on climate change. The project has focused predominantly on the work of the UN human rights treaty bodies.

2018 saw a significant increase in the engagement of UN human rights bodies with regards to the need for States to protect human rights in the context of climate change. Through the country-specific submissions that we prepared with national partners, we provided the basis for three UN human rights bodies to provide policy-relevant recommendations addressing the root causes of climate change such as the extraction and exports of coal and oil, fracking, as well as the need to uphold national emissions reduction targets.

In 2018, we submitted specific information on Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Japan, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine and the UK and we saw strong recommendations from the relevant Committees addressing issues such as coal exports, participation of women and indigenous peoples in climate decision-making, renewable energy, insufficient emissions reduction and ambition and fracking. A significant number of States are now facing questions on their climate policies when appearing before these expert human rights bodies. For example Spain was asked to *'carry out an assessment of the impact of air pollution from coal-fired power plants on children's health and on the climate as a basis for designing a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation, and strictly regulate maximum air-pollutant emissions, including those by produced private businesses.'*

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights asked Argentina to *'reconsider the large-scale exploitation of unconventional fossil fuels through hydraulic fracturing in the Vaca Muerta region, in order to ensure compliance with its obligations under the Covenant, in the light of the Paris Agreement commitments. It also encourages the State party to promote alternative and renewable energy sources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and set national targets with time-bound benchmarks.'*

In order to share information and insights and to strategise with NGO colleagues working in the climate and human rights spaces, we convened two strategy meetings. The first was in Geneva in June and the second was in December in Katowice and discussed 'Leveraging the human rights treaty bodies for legal strategies on climate action.' Building on a similar meeting in Bonn in 2017, we gathered together lawyers



and advocates working on climate litigation and campaigns, and those working on climate change within the UN human rights treaty bodies (HRTBs) for a highly interactive and stimulating exchange of information and views and the very useful suggestions for enhancing our work in 2019 (such as a greater focus on deforestation and impacts on indigenous peoples). These meetings were invaluable for building connections and fostering dialogue on opportunities for engagement with the HRTBs and ways in which that work can support climate litigation and campaigns.

In order to encourage greater awareness and understanding of the implications of climate change for human rights, we undertook capacity building and advocacy activities targeting Committee members and Secretariat staff. We conducted a number of briefings for Committee members and Secretariat staff to raise awareness and capacity to address climate change in their work.

As the body of jurisprudence and guidance on human rights and climate change continues to grow, we have prioritised monitoring, compilation and analysis of the outputs of the human rights treaty bodies. We published a [Synthesis Note](#) which provides an update on the work of the UN human rights treaty bodies with respect to human rights and climate change up to the end of 2017. It compiles the concluding observations of the treaty bodies in 2017 that address climate change and analyses what the treaty bodies' have said about States' human rights obligations in the context of climate change. It was a very popular publication that received much positive feedback, including from NGO partners and UN Committee members.

In order to promote the climate related work of the human rights treaty bodies and to raise awareness amongst States of the imperative of addressing climate change for the protection of human rights, we were involved in events at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in [March](#) and [June](#).



Both events focused on how women's rights are threatened by climate change. The event in March discussed the adoption by the Women's Rights Committee, of a new General Recommendation on the '[gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change](#).' The event in June discussed women's rights in the context of climate change and featured Ambassador Khan of Fiji, CEDAW Committee member Nahla Haidar and a representative of UN Women.



[Right to adequate housing project](#)

The realisation of the human right to adequate housing remains unfulfilled and violated daily throughout the world. Reports of mass forced evictions are common, informal settlements housing people in unhygienic, unsafe homes with a lack of privacy, are growing, discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, social position, gender and disability, in access to housing is rife and there is a crisis in homelessness. We are also increasingly seeing those working to promote and protect the right to adequate housing, being targeted and attacked in an attempt to silence them.

In this context we are working to re-energise the right to adequate housing in international human rights mechanisms and debates and to focus attention, and build political commitment, for the realisation of the right to adequate housing on the ground. In February 2018 GI-ESCR, together with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, hosted its first workshop on the Right to Adequate Housing (pictured below). Held in Geneva, it was attended by housing rights advocates from across the world (Philippines, Indonesia, Canada, Argentina, Nigeria, Kenya, the US, Serbia and International) who shared their expertise on the housing rights situation in their country and their advocacy strategies. The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Sandra Liebenberg, member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, participated in the workshop. The workshop also included a capacity building element on international housing rights law and a visit to the session of the Human Rights Council to observe the Special Rapporteur present her report.



We also undertook advocacy to influence the text of the resolution on the right to adequate housing which was adopted by the Human Rights Council during its session in March 2018. Together with participants from the workshop, we lobbied the responsible States to place greater emphasis on the continuing grave problem of forced evictions across the world.

GI-ESCR is also working with national partners to bring housing rights issues to the human rights treaty bodies on a more consistent basis. In relation to its review of the US, we submitted to the Human Rights Committee a [joint](#)

[report](#), with the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and other US NGOs, in relation to the criminalisation of homelessness and another [report](#) on homelessness and lack of access to water as violations of the right to life. The Committee highlighted both issues in its [list of questions](#) to the US, which will form the basis for the review in 2020.

We also [urged](#) the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to highlight the forced evictions and housing demolitions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in relation to its review of Israel. That Committee [asked](#) Israel to provide information on protections against forced evictions and housing demolitions and we will advocate for these topics to also be addressed during the review of Israel in October 2019.

[Elections for the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

For the CESCR elections in April 2018, we advocated for the principles of quality, independence and diversity of members to be followed when nominating and electing new members and for more transparent and rigorous processes. We disseminated information about the up-coming elections and wrote to States to encourage them, when voting, to take into consideration the poor gender balance on the Committee.



Geneva Consultation on the draft human rights guiding principles on States' obligations regarding private actors in education (the [Guiding Principles](#)), February 2018

6. Partnerships and Networks

GI-ESCR is proud to actively participate in several networks, including:

- Bringing Human Rights Home: ESC Rights Working Group
- ESCR-Net Adjudication Working Group, and Steering Committee
- ESCR-Net Social Movement Working Group and Economic Policy Working Group
- ESCR-Net Women and ESC Rights Working Group, and Steering Committee
- 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

In USD	
Total New Income (2018):	854,243
Total Rollover (from 2017):	227,475
Staff costs	
Salaries	381,974
Taxes	77,110
Benefits/Health Insurance	16,560
Interns	1,758
Consultants/Researchers	15,760
Project Costs	
Travel	55,470
Campaign	1,695
Meetings	13,743
Partnerships	
JPA costs	56,600
Consortium Coord & Partner Support	45,376
Organizational Overheads	
Communications	4,614
Internet	198
Bank Fees	1,946
Audit	2,200
Organizational (Liability) Insurance	2,524
GVA Office	
GVA office	10,860
NBO Office	
NBO Office	6,968
DLH Office	
DLH Rent	2,897
Office Supplies	1,156
TOTAL Expenses	699,212
Organizational Reserves	27,089
Total Funds Rolled Over into 2019	413,744



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