FALSE PROMISES

How delivering education through public-private partnerships risks fueling inequality instead of achieving quality education for all

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A growing body of evidence shows that education public-private partnerships (PPPs) which support private schooling are too often failing the most vulnerable children and risk deepening inequality. Despite this, the World Bank has been increasingly promoting education PPPs in poor countries through its lending and advice. Oxfam's research shows that over a fifth of World Bank education projects between 2013 and 2018 included support to governments for private provision of education. Detailed analysis also reveals the Bank's policy advice actively encourages governments to expand private provision of education. Case studies in Uganda and Pakistan raise concerns about unequal access, poor quality and low accountability. Low-fee private schools disproportionately exclude the poorest students and in particular girls, and rely on low-paid, poorly qualified teachers, many of whom are women. The World Bank and other donors should stop promoting and financing market-oriented education schemes and focus on expanding quality public schooling as a human right for all.

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Cover photo: Secondary students take their lessons at a PPP school in western Uganda. Credit: Initiative for Economic and Social Rights (ISER).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NO SHORTCUTS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Education: impressive progress, major challenges

The last 20 years have seen incredible progress in education. As a result, tens of millions of children, the majority girls, have had the chance to go to school.[1] Many poor countries are making impressive gains. For example, despite having the same per capita income today as Canada had in 1840, Ethiopia has managed to increase the number of children in school by 15 million in just 10 years.[2]

Partly because of this rapid expansion and inadequate financing, the quality of education available for many children is still very poor and major inequalities persist. A girl from a poor family in Nepal only receives on average one year of education, while a girl from a wealthy family receives nine.[3] While many countries are making serious efforts to prioritize education spending,[4] on average lower-income countries are still spending only half of what is needed per student to deliver a decent quality education.[5] Donors are failing to deliver the increased aid to help meet this financing gap. It should be no surprise that the quality of public education in some countries is struggling to catch up.

PPPs and low-fee private schools: easy shortcut or false promises?

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) encompass a range of activities. PPPs for education provision—where public funding is given to private schools to deliver education—are being promoted by the World Bank and other donors as a solution to education quality challenges. In particular, PPP models that involve outsourcing public education responsibilities to low-fee private schools, such as in Pakistan and Liberia,[6] are part of a growing trend. These schools cater to lower-income communities and are often profit-oriented. PPPs are often claimed to be less expensive and more efficient than public schooling, to provide better outcomes, to be able to scale up more rapidly, and to offer greater accountability through the mechanisms of "school choice" and competition. But these are false promises. A growing body of academic evidence shows that PPPs and private education do not necessarily deliver better education outcomes and at the same time risk increasing the gap between rich and poor.

Studies have found mixed evidence on learning outcomes in education PPPs, and no evidence that they consistently perform better than public schools.

Recent academic studies and reviews have found mixed evidence on learning outcomes in education PPPs, and no evidence that they consistently perform better than public schools.[7] Studies have also raised strong and consistent concerns about the impact of education PPPs on inequality and socioeconomic segregation. One study of 17 countries found that, "in the majority of countries, [PPP schools] are reinforcing social disparities by disproportionately serving students in upper income quintiles."[8]

A study of 17 countries found that PPP schools disproportionately benefited upper income students in the majority of countries.

The research raises particular concerns about market-oriented PPPs—those PPPs that rely on low-fee and for-profit private schools or that expand the market for private education to provide greater choice and competition. One academic review found that the competitive environments generated by many PPP models “provide incentives for schools… to discriminate against those who are less academically skilled or have special educational needs,”[9] and the OECD found that choice-based systems are often more socially segregated.[10] Commercial school chains, such as Bridge International Academies in Africa, raise particular concerns about their resistance to government regulation and legal violations, exclusion of the poorest children, scripted teaching, and a focus on profit that is at odds with investment in quality education.[11]

Women and girls are at greater risk of being marginalized by a PPP approach. School fees, even those considered low, restrict girls’ access to schooling as parents will often prefer to send boys when funds are limited.[12] The widespread elimination of user fees in primary schools in the 2000s meant tens of millions of girls were able to go to school.[13] Though some PPP programs do not allow formal fees to be charged, the schools often levy substantial informal fees and additional costs.[14] In Pakistan, the out-of-pocket costs in PPP schools were estimated to be half the income of a parent living at the poverty line.[15] Low-fee private schools also cut costs by paying teachers very low salaries and relying on poorly qualified teachers; as well as undermining the quality of education, this threatens labor rights—particularly for women, who disproportionately hold teaching jobs in most regions of the world.[16]

In Pakistan, the out-of-pocket costs in PPP schools were estimated to be half the income of a parent living at the poverty line.

Evidence from Pakistan and Uganda: unequal access, poor quality

Oxfam’s own research on a World Bank-supported PPP in Punjab, Pakistan[17] found that private schools in the study were not serving out-of-school children, the poorest girls and boys, or those with disabilities. It found the test-based funding model exacerbates inequalities by incentivizing schools to exclude those children unlikely to perform well on tests.

“*We… cannot include the poorest of the poor in this school with other kids. It’s not like a charity; we have limited funds from [the PPP] and I need to earn a livelihood from this.”* – PPP school owner

Research by the Initiative for Economic and Social Rights on the Universal Secondary Education PPP in Uganda[18] also found that equitable access was not being achieved through the PPP and that schools were not affordable for the poorest children. Shadrack Chemutia from Kween District was forced to drop out of secondary school because he had no money for school fees. The government pays for his tuition but his PPP school levied additional fees and his family has not been able to raise the money:

“I have been staying at home for one year. I would like to be a doctor. If I go to school, I can be, but if I don’t go it [will] stop me from being a doctor.” – Shadrack, 16 years old

Both studies also found evidence that education quality was poor in PPP schools due to a lack of investment and a reliance on unqualified teachers. In Uganda, students in PPP schools performed poorly on assessments compared to their counterparts in government schools and other private schools. The Punjab study found that teachers, who are predominantly female and poorly qualified, are paid on average less than half the minimum wage and receive little training. Both studies found a lack of adequate structures for oversight of schools or accountability to communities.

In Uganda, students in PPP schools performed poorly on assessments compared to their counterparts in government schools and other private schools.

These trends should be a cause for deep concern. Education can and should be an engine for greater equality, both between rich and poor and between women and men.

Yet instead the increased reliance on PPPs and expanded private schooling threatens to deepen inequality.

World Bank advice and lending: actively promoting private education and PPPs

For this report, Oxfam conducted a comprehensive review of World Bank policy advice and lending for education. The World Bank is the largest external funder of education in poor countries and implements a majority of Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grants;[19] its financing and advice is therefore important and influential.

Together with other donors, the World Bank has recently adopted a "private sector first" approach to development, agreed in 2017 during the Hamburg G20 and approved by the World Bank Board: "Only where market solutions are not possible through sector reform and risk mitigation should official and public resources be applied… This approach is currently focused on infrastructure but will be expanded to… education and health."[20] This signals a potentially sweeping shift.

Policy advice

World Bank technical support to countries on education is delivered through its Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) program. Our analysis of SABER "international best practice" recommendations and detailed policy advice[21] finds that the World Bank is actively advising countries to expand the role of the private sector in education provision through PPPs and other reforms that reduce regulations and incentivize the growth of private education markets. For example, countries are scored more highly on the SABER rubric if they "facilitate market entry for a more diverse set of private providers" and ensure that all types of providers, including for-profit schools, are allowed. Our analysis finds that this advice relies on a selective evidence base and flawed, biased assumptions.

The World Bank is actively advising countries to expand private education provision through PPPs, reduce regulations and encourage the expansion of for-profit schools.

In Ghana, World Bank policy advice recommends piloting PPPs and reducing standards for teacher certification in private schools.[22] In Nepal, it recommends that the government allow for-profit schools to be eligible for public funding of post-primary schools, something which is currently not allowed. It also recommends incentivizing private provision by providing start-up funding or public land to private schools.[23]

Project-level support

For this paper, Oxfam conducted a review of the World Bank's funding to governments for primary and secondary education over the last six years, covering 116 projects. We found that one-fifth (22 percent) of projects included elements of direct support for private provision of education across 14 countries, showing that the World Bank is following up its technical support with some significant funding.[24] This type of support has been gradually increasing over the last decade, with a more recent geographical shift to Africa. While not all Bank-supported PPPs give cause for concern and often they are one part of a larger project that supports public education, a significant number include a market-oriented approach that seeks to expand the role of private schooling.

Oxfam's research shows that over a fifth of World Bank education projects between 2013 and 2018 included support to governments for private provision of education.

In the Philippines, for example, a policy loan supports expanded funding for a PPP as one condition for the loan's disbursement.[25] In Burkina Faso, a project includes support for the construction of new private secondary schools where the ownership and management is leased to private providers.[26] Case studies from Uganda and Pakistan highlight the instrumental role of World Bank advice and lending in supporting the expansion of private education provision. Taken together with the increased direct funding of commercial schools by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the

Bank's private sector finance arm—which has quadrupled since 2006[27]—these trends are deeply concerning.

A recent study found that IFC's direct funding for private education provision has quadrupled since 2006.

Time to correct course: toward transformative public education

Education is a fundamental human right and a building block of equal societies. While the challenges and problems of public delivery in many countries are real, research indicates that neither education PPPs nor low-fee, for-profit schools are a shortcut to quality education for all. The evidence is growing on the negative impacts of this approach on inequality and must not be ignored by governments, the World Bank and other donors.

Instead the World Bank and other development actors should urgently refocus their funding and effort on expanding and improving the public provision of education in developing countries. It is time to build transformative public education that is free and universal, adequately and equitably funded, with well-supported teachers and strong systems for accountable public oversight. Transformative public education fights economic and gender inequality, builds active citizens, protects communities and the environment, and forges inclusive and stable societies. Donors and governments around the world must turn away from harmful PPP approaches and recommit to the public purpose of education.

Recommendations:

- The **World Bank** should cease its advocacy and funding for market-oriented education PPPs, especially those that support low-fee and commercial private schools, and instead redouble its focus on supporting governments to strengthen public education provision. It should redesign or do away with its SABER policy advice on the private sector. The International Finance Corporation should stop funding K-12 commercial schools.
- **Governments** should devote the maximum available resources to public education including at least six percent of GDP and 20 percent of national budgets, and avoid diverting scarce public resources and attention away from the essential task of building free, good-quality, inclusive public schools. They should adequately regulate private education providers, especially commercial schools.
- The **Global Partnership for Education and other donors** should focus their support on improving the provision of public schooling in developing countries, and should not fund market-oriented education PPPs, especially those that support low-fee and commercial private schools. Donors should substantially increase their aid commitments to education, stop funding commercial schools through their private finance arms, and insist that the World Bank reorient its approach away from PPPs and commercial schools.
- **All actors** must ensure that their efforts are compatible with the progressive realization of the right to education and gender equality.

1 INTRODUCTION

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) in education are attracting increasing attention. A number of prominent donors, including the World Bank, are promoting and funding PPPs of varying scale in the developing world, and some governments are pursuing them as a means to solve pressing challenges in public education systems, including slow progress in improving learning. While this policy approach is not new—either in wealthy or lower-income countries—it is taking on a new dimension as low-fee and commercial private schools mushroom in the developing world, creating new incentives for private actors to seek partnership with governments.

The approach is raising alarm bells among many policymakers, advocates, and practitioners who worry it will weaken public education systems, entrench inequality, and undermine the right to education. Academic research is finally starting to catch up, especially in examining the impacts of this trend on educational equity and inequality.

Box 1: What is an education PPP?

A public-private partnership is generally understood as an arrangement "between public and private actors for the delivery of goods, services and/or facilities."[28] A PPP in education can therefore be any collaboration between the private sector and the state, whether to produce textbooks, build school infrastructure, or design learning software. However, most often in policy circles the term "education PPP" refers to a partnership with the private sector for the provision of schooling.

For the purposes of this report, we will likewise use the term "education PPP" to refer to the public funding of private schools for the delivery of education. This can be through direct assistance to private schools—such as per-student subsidies, block grants, or funding to private organizations to manage public schools (sometimes called "supply-side" PPPs)—or through "demand-side" funding, such as vouchers, scholarships, or cash transfers for students to use in accessing private schools. This report also discusses "market-oriented PPPs," which we define as those PPPs that partner with low-fee or commercial private schools, or aim to expand the market for private education, thereby increasing choice and competition.

Education PPPs share many features of PPPs in other sectors that rely on private providers to deliver a public good or service, depending on their structure. But in many other ways education PPPs are distinct: often they do not feature a long-term binding contract with a single private provider, but can fund a number of smaller providers or individual schools based on more short-term, conditional, or results-based funding models.[29] They may feature a diversity of providers, including both for-profit and nonprofit actors; may include both formal and more informal or community schools; and they may or may not charge school fees directly to students, depending on the model.

Education PPPs also operate in a sector where the state has an obligation under international human rights law to provide quality public education, and to guarantee the fulfillment of the right to education. This report focuses in particular on PPPs for the delivery of primary and secondary education, as the state has traditionally delivered both sub-sectors in countries that have achieved universal education, and as basic education is considered an obligation of the state under international human rights law.

EDUCATION: REMARKABLE PROGRESS, MAJOR CHALLENGES REMAINING

The last twenty years have seen a historic and rapid expansion of basic education in the developing world. Tens of millions of children, the majority girls, have had the chance to go to school,[30] fuelled in part by the widespread abolition of school fees at primary level.[31] Many low-income countries are making impressive gains. For example, Ethiopia has managed to increase the number of children in school from 10 million to 25 million in just 10 years.[32]

Partly due to this rapid expansion and inadequate resources, the quality of education in many countries has failed to keep pace. The World Bank, in its 2018 *World Development Report* (WDR) on education,[33] has popularized the idea of a global "learning crisis" to describe very serious challenges in ensuring a basic level of education quality in many education systems. UNESCO estimates that 125 million children are not acquiring functional numeracy or literacy after spending four years in school.[34]

This is indeed an urgent problem, as quality education is fundamental to unlocking the poverty-fighting and inequality-busting benefits of education for people and for societies. Furthermore, learning is not equitably distributed: gender, income, disability, and other types of marginalization combine to deepen disparities. As the WDR highlights, for example, in Cameroon only five percent of girls from the poorest quintile of households had learned enough to continue in school, versus 76 percent from the richest quintile.[35]

Focusing primarily on learning, however, risks ignoring the substantial unmet needs in access to education—the 64 million children still out of primary school, and the total of 263 million children out of school across both primary and secondary levels.[36] These children tend to be the poorest and most marginalized, and they are almost certainly failing to learn. They are still disproportionately girls at primary level, and at secondary level girls face disparities in enrollment and completion, especially in low-income countries.[37] For example, a girl from a poor family in Nepal only receives on average one year in school while a girl from a wealthy family receives nine.[38] In sub-Saharan Africa, 86 girls completed lower secondary education for every 100 boys.[39] This is an urgent unfinished agenda that must not be overlooked if we are concerned about inequalities in education and inequality more broadly.

However, this situation has its roots in a less widely acknowledged crisis: a crisis of financing. Despite the staggering expansion of educational access, countries have not mobilized the funding necessary to deliver quality public education that is truly available to all. While many countries are making impressive efforts to prioritize spending on education,[40] in other countries inadequate political support and insufficient tax and other government revenues drive the financing crisis. This is exacerbated by global tax dodging that deprives countries of crucial resources, and low levels of aid for education and other essential services, especially for the poorest countries.[41]

UNESCO estimates the minimum cost to deliver decent-quality primary education in low-income countries at $197 per student, while on average these countries are spending well under half that amount ($70 per student). In lower-middle-income countries the gap is similarly large, with $510 needed per student and half this amount allocated in practice.[42] While good policies are important, this very serious financing crisis has been a major factor behind slow progress in improving learning among lower-income countries.

PPPS AND LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOLS: AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION?

Low-fee private schools (LFPS) have been rapidly expanding in many lower-income countries partly as a response to these gaps, including inadequate geographical distribution of public schools, as well as the perceived benefits of private schools; increasingly, they are driven by corporate and international investment. LFPS (sometimes called "low-cost private schools") refer to private schools catering to lower-income segments of the population often with a profit orientation, charging fees that are lower than those of traditional private schools.

Some LFPS are run by a local entrepreneur or community member, while others are more accurately described as commercial schools due to their greater focus on profit generation and larger scale. Prominent school chains such as Bridge International Academies[43] operating in Africa and India, APEC Schools[44] in the Philippines, and Omega Schools[45] in Ghana, are examples of this commercial model. These corporate-backed schools are part of what has been termed a "second wave"[46] in the evolution of the low-fee private sector over the last decade, particularly in middle-income countries, in which the entry of corporate and private capital[47] has driven the expansion of such schools and an ecosystem of related service providers. While these schools advertise superior learning outcomes, they have been the subject of intense criticism from civil society, various UN human rights bodies, and academics for their disproportionate exclusion of the poorest children and girls, low quality of education, poor treatment of teachers, and resistance to government regulation.

Yet despite these concerns, there is a growing trend of contracting out or subsidizing educational provision in low-fee private schools through PPPs, as in Liberia, India, Pakistan, South Africa, and Uganda.[48] PPPs are promoted as an innovative solution to the challenges in public education delivery. They are claimed to be less expensive and more efficient than public schooling, to provide better outcomes, to increase access for the poorest, to be more rapidly scalable, and to offer greater accountability through the mechanisms of "school choice" and competition. It is in this context and according to this rationale that the World Bank, some of the regional development banks, corporate philanthropy, and some bilateral donors such as the UK, are supporting the expansion of PPPs in education. But are these claims legitimate—or are they based on flawed assumptions? Are PPPs genuinely addressing the problems in education financing, access, and quality—or do they simply create new problems?

This paper attempts to answer these questions by first, assessing the body of literature on PPPs in education. This includes a look at the literature specifically on LFPS, given their growing relevance in PPP programs. It then considers two country case studies of World Bank-supported PPPs, in Uganda and Pakistan. It follows with new analysis of the World Bank policy advice program that guides countries on engaging the private sector in education, and presents new research that shines a light on the Bank's portfolio of funding for PPPs in education. Finally, it concludes with recommendations for the World Bank, other donors, and governments.

2 THE EVIDENCE ON PPPS IN EDUCATION

The international body of research on PPPs in education is growing rapidly, though still limited. While much academic and institutional research is quite cautious in making positive claims and highlights profound concerns about the impact of PPPs on inequality, the World Bank's own research, policy analysis, and evaluations of its own programs supporting PPPs have tended to promote a positive narrative about the potential of private education provision.

WHAT DO WORLD BANK PUBLICATIONS SAY ABOUT PPPS?

The World Bank has been a key intellectual driver of PPPs as an education policy reform.[49] For example, the first published reference to "PPPs for education" can be found in the 2000 World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) joint report *The New Social Policy Agenda in Asia.*[50] Throughout the 2000s, a number of global publications, policy briefs, and toolkits on PPPs were produced by the Bank and its private sector finance arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC). Important among them is the 2004 WDR, *Making Services Work for Poor People*, which advocates for the public funding of private schools (and other private services, including water and health care) as a mechanism to fix the "broken cycle of accountability" between citizens, schools, and states through the democratic process.[51] The report promotes a superior "short route" to accountability that makes schools directly accountable to parents and communities, through market-based competition and school choice mechanisms—whether through a PPP or purely free market approach.

Another influential report, *The Role and Impact of Public-Private Partnerships in Education*, is a foundational piece for the Bank in creating a typology for and promoting state engagement with alternative forms of education provision.[52] While it acknowledges the scarcity of studies on PPPs (especially at that time), it nevertheless argues that PPPs have a number of benefits, including greater efficiency, wider access to education (particularly for excluded households), higher test scores, and greater choice for households. The Bank has also produced a number of country-specific evaluations and experimental research studies—for example, the 2008 LEAPS study in Pakistan, which found positive outcomes in LFPS in Punjab province.[53] However, often these studies fail to focus sufficiently on poverty and inequality impacts.[54]

Academic commentators have noted the role of World Bank publications in positioning the Bank as a policy advocate for PPPs.[55] For example, Mundy and Menashy (2014) find that on balance, the Bank's publications and knowledge products "actively promote private sector provision" of education, and note that they draw almost exclusively from the discipline of economics.[56] Another study that employs a bibliometric analysis of works cited in World Bank publications on private education finds that they "rely heavily on authors connected to the World Bank itself," as well as to a narrow set of primarily US-based, elite academic institutions, raising concerns about propensity for bias.[57]

More recently, in a significant shift for the Bank, the 2018 WDR takes a far more cautious approach regarding the potential of private education provision. The report, *Learning to Realize Education's Promise,* concludes that "there is no consistent evidence that private schools deliver better learning outcomes than public schools, or the opposite," and discusses both the potential benefits and risks of the growth in private schooling.[58] It references PPPs as a useful strategy to expand enrolllment quickly, but also notes that for governments, "overseeing private schools may be no easier than providing quality schooling."[59]

"There is no consistent evidence that private schools deliver better learning outcomes than public schools, or the opposite."

– World Bank World Development Report 2018

It is unclear to what extent the 2018 WDR will shape World Bank analysis and policy advice going forward. For example, the Bank is still using its 2014 policy framework *What Matters Most for Engaging the Private Sector in Education*[60] as part of its "Systems Approach for Better Education Results" (SABER) program to advise countries on "what works" in education. This framework encourages governments to support the expansion of private schooling through public funding, among other policies, and will be discussed further in section 4.

WHAT DOES THE ACADEMIC LITERATURE SAY ABOUT PPPS IN EDUCATION?

Recently, two reviews and a large-scale study have contributed to a better understanding of the impacts of this approach, and raised significant doubts about the validity of many of the positive claims made about PPPs. In their 2017 review of the literature on PPPs in education, Verger and Moschetti explain that, in contrast to the narrative of PPP proponents that they expand access, improve quality and equity, or promote innovation, "the academic evidence to date suggests that results across these and other dimensions are not so clear."[61]

In the area of learning, the review finds that "while some studies have found positive effects of these interventions on learning outcomes, others argue that the impact is marginal or non-existent." Similarly, in their 2017 rigorous review of the evidence on PPPs in education, Aslam, Rawal and Saeed find that the body of evidence on learning outcomes in both voucher provision and contract/charter schools is mixed and inconclusive, and therefore insufficient.[62] On models that provide subsidies for private schools, they find a modest body of evidence for a weakly positive relationship to learning outcomes. The authors emphasize that while there may be some evidence on the relative effectiveness of non-state schools, there are "worryingly low levels of overall achievement across the entire education system and, therefore, any relative advantage associated with the non-state sector may still not be sufficiently large to alleviate quality concerns."

In 2018 a new study was published by Donald Baum utilizing data from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)[63] across 17 high- and middle-income countries. The study finds that there is no achievement advantage in PPP schools after accounting for student selection and peer group effects.[64] Additionally, in three countries (Hungary, Thailand, and Trinidad and Tobago), the study finds a significant public school achievement advantage.

Inequality and socioeconomic segregation: consistent concerns

Importantly, the literature raises strong and consistent concerns about educational inequalities and impacts on socioeconomic segregation and stratification. Baum's 17-country study also finds that "PPP schools appear to be outperforming public schools not through any superior or innovative practices, but rather by cream-skimming more capable students into the private sector. Enrollment in a PPP school is tied to powerful socioeconomic indicators such as student wealth and prior academic ability… In a majority of countries, [PPP schools] are reinforcing social disparities by disproportionately serving students in the upper income quintiles."[65]

"Enrollment in a PPP school is tied to powerful socioeconomic indicators such as student wealth and prior academic ability… In a majority of countries, [PPP schools] are reinforcing social disparities by disproportionately serving students in the upper income quintiles."

– Baum (2018)

Underscoring these findings, the Verger and Moschetti review of the literature finds that the competitive environments generated by many PPP frameworks "provide incentives for schools to recruit the best and 'cheapest to educate' students, as well as to discriminate against those who are less academically skilled or have special educational needs." In Argentina, for example, pervasive student-selection practices were found in state-funded LFPS in Buenos Aires, which used admissions screening tests and interviews to select more desirable students, despite this practice being explicitly forbidden.[66] This, combined with strategies used by schools to charge additional fees, has contributed to deepening segregation in the city's education system. In India, research on the Right to Education Act's provision to mandate that private schools offer 25 percent of their seats free to disadvantaged children found that it was the relatively more advantaged among this group who secured free places at more prestigious or middle-class private schools, and those who did incurred significant non-fee schooling costs.[67]

Educational PPPs involving demand-side funding schemes, such as vouchers, tend to increase educational inequalities and socioeconomic segregation in schools.

Studies also find that educational PPPs involving demand-side funding schemes, such as vouchers, tend to increase educational inequalities and socioeconomic segregation in schools.[68] The experience of Chile, which has the largest-scale voucher program globally, illustrates this finding (Box 2).

Box 2: Chile's market-based PPP experience: socioeconomic stratification and inequality

Chile is one of the most unequal countries in the world,[69] and its education system is fueling this situation. Chile's 30-year experiment with a voucher-based PPP model has become an important cautionary tale. The government provided vouchers directly to families to send children to the private or public school of their choice, enabling them to subsidize fees, including in more selective, expensive private schools. The system has resulted in severe socioeconomic stratification within the education system, with the poorest students generally concentrated in neglected, low-performing government schools,[70] and no evidence of improved average educational outcomes at the national level.[71] The relationship between socioeconomic status and performance in the international PISA tests is higher in Chile than any other OECD country, and Chile ranks last in the OECD for the number of students from the country's poorest 25 percent who score in the top quarter of test results internationally.[72] Following citizen and student protests, a number of recent reforms to the Chilean education system have been enacted to dismantle aspects of the voucher program and strengthen Chile's public schools. However, the legacy of this ongoing PPP model continues to be a highly privatized and stratified education system.

The idea that market competition drives up quality and efficiency is also called into question by a number of studies, which raise doubts about whether a diversity of providers actually improves classroom practices and whether short-term budget savings are matched with long-run cost effectiveness. In particular, Verger and Moschetti note that the “efficiency gains of PPPs usually come at a cost of worsening working conditions for teachers,” with implications for the quality of teaching and learning.

The OECD finds that “across countries and economies, performance is unrelated to whether or not schools have to compete for students,” but that systems with low levels of competition often have high levels of social inclusion, and conversely choice-based systems are often more socially segregated.[73] For example, research finds that charter schools (privately managed public schools) in the U.S. have deepened racial segregation, with limited choice available for the most disadvantaged students.[74] UNESCO’s 2018 *Global Education Monitoring Report* on accountability concludes that a market-based approach creates competitive pressure that marginalizes disadvantaged parents and schools.[75]

The OECD finds that education systems with low levels of competition often have high levels of social inclusion, and conversely choice-based systems are often more socially segregated.

Gender inequality in private schools

Gender has been almost totally neglected in the research on education PPPs. This is an important gap that must urgently be filled. However, research on gender in private schools more broadly, including in LFPS, raises significant concerns—these concerns are also relevant to PPPs. A 2014 review of studies in 11 countries funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) found that private schools are not equally accessed by boys and girls, and several new studies have reinforced this finding.[76] Gender also interacts with other forms of exclusion from private schooling, such as poverty (see below) and disability, deepening inequality of access. For example, research in Pakistan found that private school enrollment is more likely among boys with disabilities, while girls with disabilities are more likely to be out of school.[77] The global expansion of LFPS is therefore a source of deep concern in a sector which saw widespread access and gender parity gains in the 2000s.

A review of studies in 11 countries found that private schools are not equally accessed by boys and girls.

Families often prioritize the education of boys over girls because of the perceived higher return on the costs of educating boys. Though in some PPP programs schools may not formally charge fees, schools frequently levy significant additional fees and informal charges, as is the case in Argentina,[78] India,[79] Pakistan, and Uganda.[80] High costs are therefore likely to be a continued barrier to access and retention for girls in PPP contexts, and are likely to have negative impacts on gender parity.

In addition, studies that highlight exceptionally low pay for teachers in LFPS[81] are particularly relevant for women’s economic and labor rights in most regions of the world, where women disproportionately hold teaching jobs.[82] For example, a recent study of female teachers in LFPS in Punjab, Pakistan found that the system capitalizes on the low labor force participation of women and their limited choice of profession and mobility.[83] It found that LFPS are responsible for creating a category of “low salaried, untrained, temporary” female teacher in the labor market. The precarious and informal nature of this work for women in LFPS, and the poor conditions in which they work raise concerns about labor rights violations and a broader deepening of gender inequality, including the replication of harmful gender norms.[84]

A study in Pakistan found that low-fee private schools are responsible for creating a category of low salaried, untrained, temporary female teacher in the labor market – raising concerns about labor rights violations and gender inequality.

Low-fee private schools: access and quality challenges

Given their growing relevance in PPP programs, the broader literature on LFPS, including commercial schools, is important to consider. Research on access and affordability in the low-fee sector has shown that households accessing these schools are unlikely to be the most disadvantaged or the poorest 20 percent, and when they do enroll, household poverty increases.[85] The fees charged by these schools—even those considered "low"—are an important barrier to educational access for poor households.[86] As previously described, fees are not always present in PPP settings; however, additional costs and informal fees are prevalent in many PPPs. Families who are able to pay fees often do so at great sacrifice, forgoing other basic needs.[87] The literature also finds that private schools are more concentrated in urban areas, and do not tend to reach children living in rural areas or the poorest or most difficult-to-reach communities.[88]

Looking beyond access to education quality, the literature is mixed on the effectiveness of LFPS and raises a number of concerns. As Srivastava explains in her review of the literature on LFPS, the full portfolio of evidence on the quality of these schools is inconclusive.[89] The DFID review found that pupils in private schools tend to achieve better learning outcomes than pupils in public schools. However, the review was not restricted to LFPS, and it acknowledges that socioeconomic factors were not always adequately accounted for in the studies. Furthermore, the authors cite systemic quality concerns, noting that "many children may not be achieving basic competencies even in private schools."

LFPS keep costs low by using strategies that impact negatively on education quality. Studies show that the low-fee sector consistently relies on unqualified, short-term contract teachers and pays them extremely low wages, sometimes well below the minimum wage.[90] While the DFID review found evidence that some teaching practices are better in private schools—such as pupil-teacher ratios, and teacher presence and activity—the reliance on unqualified teachers flies in the face of evidence that the presence of a trained, qualified, and well-supported educator is one of the most critical factors in determining strong learning outcomes and education quality.[91] The pressure to reduce costs may also lead to lower investments in school facilities and other resources that promote learning.

Studies show that the low-fee sector consistently relies on unqualified, short-term contract teachers and pays them extremely low wages, sometimes well below the minimum wage.

Box 3: Bridge Academies and other commercial schools: profit orientation at odds with equitable, quality education

A number of studies raise concerns about the practices of commercial schools, particularly chains, as well as the profit-oriented model in many LFPS. In addition to unequal access for the poorest children and girls, poor treatment of teachers, and quality challenges typical in LFPS (as previously discussed), some practices of commercial schools may also lead to further trade-offs with education quality due to their scale and greater profit orientation. For example, the prominent commercial chains Bridge International Academies and Omega Schools rely on scripted, standardized lessons to compensate for the absence of well-trained teachers, and increase their scale in order to achieve commercial viability.[92]

These teaching practices have drawn criticism for encouraging rote learning rather than higher-order skills such as critical thinking. One study described Omega's standardized approach as the "McDonaldization of education," in which "every aspect in the production of learning and outcomes [is] based on the minimisation of cost."[93]

A study by RESULTS Educational Fund of several commercial chains that are recipients of IFC education investments found that business interests were sometimes prioritized over educational goals such as investments in facilities and teachers, in order to ensure financial stability—either enabling loan repayment or expansion to meet the needs of the low-margin business model.[94] A profit orientation may also be present in many non-commercial, low-fee schools: one study on the motivations of LFPS owners in Lucknow District, India, found that they had to "reconcile competing interests for philanthropy and profit-making," including in decisions to grant reductions in fees for families in need.[95]

Another hallmark of commercial schools has been resistance to government regulation that seeks to ensure compliance with educational standards and legal frameworks. For example, Bridge International Academies was ordered by the Ugandan government to close its schools in the country in 2018 after its ongoing refusal to meet standards related to teacher certification and qualifications, curriculum, and school facilities.[96] This followed a 2016 ruling of the Ugandan High Court which upheld a Ministry of Education decision to close the chain after years of inaction in responding to government regulatory efforts.[97] In Kenya, similar concerns have led to an order to close schools in Busia County.[98] In response to these and other concerns about the company's operations, a formal complaint[99] about the World Bank IFC's investment in Bridge Academies was filed with the the IFC Compliance Advisor Ombudsman in 2018 by the East African Centre for Human Rights on behalf of teachers and parents in Kenya. Legal and regulatory violations in commercial and low-fee schools have been documented in a number of other countries including the Philippines, India, and Ghana.[100]

This emphasis on driving down costs is at odds with the goal of holistic, quality education. It calls into question claims of greater efficiency or value for money in LFPS, and raises serious concerns about partnerships with LFPS in education PPPs. While systemic quality concerns across both public and private sectors are real, they demand greater public investment in and attention to schools, teachers, and pedagogy—a feature of all high-performing education systems—not an approach that is structurally dependent on low investments in teaching and learning.

GROWING CONCERNS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

UN and other human rights bodies have increasingly raised concerns about the growing privatization and commercialization of education and its impact on the right to education and the rights of women, as protected under the human rights treaties monitored by these committees. They have addressed the growing role of private actors in education at least 29 times in 16 states in the last several years.[101] This includes concluding observations from all the major treaty bodies, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), and the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); concerns have also been raised by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). This reflects growing concerns about unregulated private providers of education including in PPP contexts.

Through PPPs, states are "divesting themselves of their primary public function. As a result, rather than supplementing government efforts, private providers are supplanting public education and commercializing education in the process."

– Dr. Kishore Singh, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

The former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education also raised the alert about these trends in three reports to the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, in 2014 and 2015. He emphasized "the need to preserve education as a public good, which must not be reduced to a profit-making business," and highlighted concerns that through PPPs, states are "divesting themselves of their primary public function. As a result, rather than supplementing government efforts, private providers are supplanting public education and commercializing education in the process."[102]

The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights recently cautioned that assumptions made about PPPs and other forms of privatization are "deeply mistaken. [They] ignore the motivations driving the process as well as the the essential unwillingness of the private sector to take on rights-related obligations, the inability of pared-down Governments to exercise meaningful supervision, the difficulty of monitoring disparate private providers, the removal of much economic decision-making from the purview of democratic contestation, and the wide-ranging consequences of empowering profit-seeking corporate actors in what used to be the public sphere."[103]

Most recently, the international human rights standards and jurisprudence on the right to education were consolidated and interpreted in a set of guiding principles, known as *The Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education.*[104] The text was adopted by international human rights experts in February 2019 in Côte d'Ivoire and provides guidance on the obligations of States in guaranteeing the right to education as prescribed under human rights law. This includes States' legal obligations to establish free, quality, public education for all, to regulate private actors, to limit supplementary private provision which infringes on the right to education, and to guarantee that all participants involved in education are aligned toward the common aim of realizing the right to education.

Box 4: Liberia's PPP experiment: outsourcing education to low-fee private schools

In 2016, the government of Liberia announced a program to turn over its public primary schools to private school operators, including the prominent for-profit chain Bridge International Academies. The aim of the program was to rapidly improve learning outcomes in Liberia's education system, which was in poor condition after years of conflict. After a widespread outcry, including criticism about a failure to consult with civil society or provide transparency about contracts, the program was scaled back to a pilot for its first year.

A preliminary randomized impact evaluation[105] found some learning gains after the first year. However, school operators were given greater funding than public schools and Bridge Academies was found to spend 13 times the per-student funding in public schools.[106] PPP schools also received additional teachers and Bridge Academies was found to employ staffing selection practices that had significant negative side-effects on government schools. The study also found that some children were excluded from their schools after the school was taken over by Bridge Academies and had to be absorbed by nearby public schools.

These findings casts doubt on the arguments about cost effectiveness and scalability, and the government's claim that the PPP is necessary because it is more affordable than public schools. They also raise sharp questions about whether it is appropriate for an international corporation to operate on a commercial model that seeks to deliver returns to private investors—sourced from the meager public funding for education in one of the world's poorest countries. The then UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Education, Kishore Singh, expressed alarm as the policy was being formed in 2016, saying: "This is unprecedented at the scale currently being proposed. Provision of public education of good quality is a core function of the state, and abandoning this to the commercial benefit of a private company constitutes a gross violation of the right to education."[107]

The existing literature raises substantial and deep concerns about the acceptability of PPPs as an education policy reform, including and especially market-oriented PPPs—those that rely on low-fee and commercial schools, or on expanding choice and competition in the education system. While not all PPPs are market-oriented and not all are necessarily cause for concern—some may actually aim to bring a disparate private sector into the public system with the goal of reversing a process of privatization and expanding public provision[108]—in general the evidence calls for extreme caution. Across many countries and contexts, education PPPs lack a clear performance advantage, and yet they have produced well-documented and profoundly troubling impacts on educational inequality and social segregation; a negative impact on the human right to education, and on the state's role in fulfilling its obligation as the primary provider and guarantor of this right; and a potentially lasting erosion of the public purpose of education. PPPs therefore threaten to deepen larger trends of growing economic and social inequality, against which equalizing and good-quality public education is a desperately needed bulwark.

For these reasons, Oxfam is deeply alarmed at the expansion of PPPs in education, especially in lower-income countries and, in particular, at their promotion by global donors and institutions that are tasked with fighting poverty and inequality.

3 CASE STUDIES OF WORLD BANK-SUPPORTED PPPS:

Few independent or external analyses have been conducted of World Bank-supported PPP programs in education. Most evidence from these programs comes from the Bank's own project evaluations and research. For this report, Oxfam draws upon two recent independent studies conducted by civil society organizations to consider the impact of the PPP programs, with a focus on educational inequalities and the right to education. Both studies are qualitative by design, in order to go beyond macro-level enrollment and testing data to provide an in-depth picture of the school- and community-level dynamics of the PPP programs.

UGANDA'S UNIVERSAL SECONDARY EDUCATION PPP

In 2007, the Government of Uganda embarked on its first education PPP program as part of its newly adopted Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy. Due to the success of its universal primary education program, demand was growing for secondary education across the country. At the same time, public investment in education was stagnating and funding had not kept pace with increased enrollment, resulting in declining standards and quality of education, and contributing to a rapid growth in private schools. With limited places and facilities in public schools, and large numbers of sub-counties without government secondary schools, the PPP program's rationale was to expand access, improve efficiency, and mobilize external resources by partnering with private schools.

The USE PPP is a "supply-side" model that provides a per-student capitation grant to private school providers that agree to enroll qualifying USE students at no additional charge to students. Qualifying students are those who reach a certain score on the Primary Leaving Examinations. Government secondary schools in the USE program also receive a grant to replace tuition fees. Three types of private schools are supported by the PPP, including for-profit, nonprofit, and community schools; however, the majority are for-profit low-fee schools, and only one nonprofit provider participates. Since the inception of the program, overall enrollment has increased across both government and PPP schools, the number of PPP schools has more than doubled, and enrollment in private schools has grown from 25 to 45 percent.

In order to better understand the impacts of the program and its compliance with human rights standards, the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), an independent NGO in Uganda, conducted a qualitative study in 2016 to gather data on the PPP implementing schools and their impact in communities.[109] A follow-up analysis examined the PPP's accountability framework in 2017.[110]

Findings of the Uganda study

"Most of these private actors in education are business people in need of a return on their investment—[they] don't want to start up schools in rural or very remote areas where parents are poor."

– Ugandan Ministry of Education official

The study found significant evidence to suggest that Uganda's USE PPP scheme may not be helping to fulfill the right to education in Uganda, and that despite overall increases in enrollment, equitable geographical access to education has not been achieved under the program. The data indicates that contrary to the PPP policy, PPP schools also exist in sub-counties in which there are already public schools, despite the fact that 608 sub-counties are still without a government secondary school. Consistent with literature from other countries, the study finds that the LFPS in the PPP are mainly concentrated in urban sub-counties, limiting geographical access for children from rural areas and increasing socioeconomic segregation.

The study further suggests that the PPP initiative has not succeeded in reducing the significant obstacles impeding vulnerable and marginalized groups of students from accessing quality education, especially high non-fee costs. Despite explicit rules against fee-charging, the study finds that many PPP schools are levying additional fees and pursuing other tactics to increase revenue; some PPP schools charge as much as 270,000 Ugandan shillings (UGX) in additional fees per term, almost six times the amount paid by the government per child. As a result, the study finds that PPP schools are not affordable for children from the poorest backgrounds. The story of one teen interviewed for the study illustrates the impact of these fees:

Some PPP schools charge fees as much as six times the amount paid by the government per child.

"Shadrack Chemutia from Kween District is 16 years old, he has stayed away from school for one year because he has no money for school fees…Government pays UGX 47,000 for his tuition but his school has levied an additional UGX 50,000. He also cannot afford UGX 30,000 [for] school uniform and other expenses. Shadrack is trying to raise money for school but has not yet succeeded."

While enrollment rates for girls and boys were found to be roughly equivalent, high dropout rates were observed for girls, especially in upper-grade levels—particularly in slum areas, where girls are more vulnerable to pregnancy and early marriage. Many PPP schools also lack basic sanitary facilities such as clearly separated latrines and washrooms to support girls' education.[111] The research also finds no reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities in PPP schools, including inaccessible facilities, and a lack of special needs teachers.

"There was a time I got a science teacher, a fresh graduate from Makerere, but when I told him the payment, he laughed at me and said bye."

– Head teacher, PPP school

Moreover, the research found that the quality of education in many PPP schools is significantly compromised, due in part to insufficient capitation grants, the for-profit nature of PPP schools,[112] as well as a widespread shortage of resources including—but not restricted to—learning materials, basic infrastructure, and qualified teachers. It found a high teacher turnover rate, especially among science teachers, due to a shortage of qualified teachers and low levels of remuneration. This has led to the recruitment of unqualified teachers, which has eroded education quality. The study finds high average failure rates in science in the schools studied. National data also finds that PPP schools rate very poorly in comparative assessments across subjects—on average, students in PPP schools show the lowest proficiency in English, mathematics and biology compared to those in government and other private schools.[113]

Students in PPP schools have lower scores in English, mathematics and biology compared with students in government and other private schools.

Lastly, the data points to significant concerns about accountability and transparency in many PPP schools: supervisory and regulatory mechanisms are both unclear and ineffective in many of the PPP schools examined, and most schools do not have a functional Board of Governors, a mechanism that is supposed to provide oversight and accountability to communities. A worrying number of PPP schools were found by the researchers to be in contravention of their signed Memoranda of Understanding, with little evidence of sanctions or penalties for such breaches, and overall the government is failing to regulate compliance. ISER's follow-up study also raised concerns about the profit orientation of school owners: "clearly many school owners saw USE grants… as an opportunity to make a quick return on investment," with little accountability for the use of such funds.

ISER concludes that major reforms are needed to the PPP program, including phasing out poor-quality low-fee schools, better government regulation of fees and other standards, and greater public participation. Ultimately, a different approach should be considered that directs more investment toward secondary schools to improve quality and more equal access, especially in the public system.

Role of the World Bank in the Uganda USE PPP

The World Bank has played a role in advocating for and financing the USE PPP as well as broader private school expansion in Uganda. As early as 2002, in analytical work for the Ugandan government, the World Bank recommended it consider expanding its capitation grants for secondary schools to include private secondary schools.[114]

The World Bank in 2009 provided a loan of $150 million to support the government's Universal Post-Primary Education and Training (UPPET) program. The USE PPP program was one component of this, though a large part of the Bank's financing was actually directed to the construction of government secondary schools, curriculum reform, teacher training, and capacity building in the education ministry.[115] The project documents describe the PPP as an "efficient approach to expansion" and suggest that support to the PPP schools "will provide a predictable revenue stream enabling their own expansion and improved quality." Other World Bank support for education in Uganda has been delivered via two recent Poverty Reduction Support Credits, essentially general budget support instruments which support a series of government priorities, including education.

Shortly after the USE PPP was introduced, in 2010 the IFC launched the Africa Schools Uganda Program[116] to support improvements to private secondary and tertiary schools in Uganda, along with the African Development Bank (AfDB). The program planned to deliver advisory services and financing to 500 for-profit private schools in Uganda over the following two years, helping them address financial and management issues in order to "support the growth of private schools in the country, increasing access to high-quality education across income levels."[117] Combined with the Bank-supported government USE PPP policy, this IFC investment clearly served to reinforce and accelerate the growth of private schools in Uganda.

An IFC program in Uganda planned to "support the growth of private schools in the country, increasing access to high-quality education across income levels."

More recently, in 2018 the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports announced a decision to gradually phase out the USE PPP program,[118] a change in course reflecting concerns about the quality of some PPP schools and a desire to redirect resources to establishing new government secondary schools in sub-counties lacking these schools. A proposed new World Bank secondary education project for $150 million, currently in the pipeline at the time of this publication,[119] appears to support the government in this expansion by funding the construction of new public secondary schools, education for refugees and host communities, and specific interventions to encourage girls' enrollment and learning. This proposed project, as currently formulated, is notable for its support of the government's prioritization of public sector expansion, and its willingness to shift away from its previous support for a PPP approach in Uganda. It remains to be seen whether this new project will become a positive example of World Bank funding for the strengthening of equitable public education and for reversing a process of privatization.

PAKISTAN SCALES UP A PPP APPROACH

Pakistan faces steep challenges in fulfilling the right to education. It has the second-largest population in the world of out-of-school children; fewer girls than boys in school; limited access to schooling for children with disabilities and those from the poorest communities; and serious education quality and learning deficits. Public spending on education has hovered at just above two percent of GDP in recent years,[120] one of the lowest levels among lower-income countries and well below international benchmarks. LFPS have mushroomed across the country, filling gaps in access where public schools do not exist or are lacking in quality; however, they tend to locate in wealthier villages and settlements, and face their own serious quality constraints.

In this context, the governments of Punjab and Sindh provinces are pursuing PPPs that subsidize LFPS as a means of expanding educational access and improving the quality of schooling. The PPP in Punjab is administered by the quasi-governmental, semi-autonomous Punjab Education Foundation (PEF). PEF's four programs employ various PPP models, including a voucher program (providing tuition-replacement vouchers for students, to be spent in LFPS); a program that provides per-student stipends to existing LFPS; another that funds the establishment of new schools in rural or underserved areas; and a public school takeover program which transfers the management of public schools to private entrepreneurs and civil society organizations. PEF requires schools to meet a minimum pass rate on a standardized test in order to receive funding.

A 2018 qualitative research study by Oxfam[121] seeks to understand the dynamics of the Punjab PPP initiative at the school level, and assess its impact on key dimensions of equity, education quality, and democratic and social accountability in a sample of PPP schools in both rural and urban/slum areas of the province.

"The poor go to the government schools in the area. They cannot afford any expenditure on education... We…cannot include the poorest of the poor in this school with other kids. It's not like a charity, we have limited funds from [the PPP] and I need to earn a livelihood from this…"

– Head teacher, PPP school

Findings of the Punjab study

The study's findings suggest that the PPP program is unlikely to be improving access to education in Punjab or reducing educational inequality. Only one percent of children in the sampled PPP schools were previously out of school, and there were very few children with disabilities. Gender parity was not being achieved in most schools in the study; among co-ed schools, 75 percent had more boys than girls, and dropout rates were high for girls. The study finds that high non-fee costs are a significant barrier to access for the poorest children, representing half the income of a parent living at the poverty line.

Furthermore, it sheds light on the unintended consequences of a high-stakes "reward and sanction" model in which schools' funding is tied to student performance on a standardized test. The findings suggest that this approach creates incentives for schools to exclude the poorest children, children with disabilities, and others who are likely to do poorly on tests. In the voucher program, school owners reported that they themselves selected students to receive the voucher—not the other way around—and that they charged students a fee for the first year before admitting them to the voucher program.

"… the syllabus we have to follow is all based on rote memorization. We are teaching to the test. You teach your kids the [test] format and practice on past paper guides being sold in the market. There is no conceptual learning taking place in the schools. I don't think quality is a goal of PEF..."

– Head teacher, PPP school

The study challenges the validity of a number of key claims made about PPPs—including that they are more cost-effective than other options, and provide better-quality education while sidestepping inefficiency in the public sector. It suggests that cost savings come at a high price, and that schools in the sample are sacrificing quality due to a lack of investment in qualified teachers, relevant training and support, and adequate facilities—and in some schools, a profit orientation. It also finds that schools predominantly employ a low-paid female teaching workforce, with average reported salaries less than half the minimum wage—suggesting that the system relies on gender inequality in the labor market.

Schools predominantly employ a low-paid female teaching workforce, with average reported salaries less than half the minimum wage.

The study also finds a lack of democratic and social accountability in the sampled PPP schools; for example, none of the schools studied had a school management committee or parent-teacher council. Furthermore, bias and irregularities in the monitoring and inspection of schools suggest that bribery practices and inefficiency are systemic challenges not limited to the public sector. Overall, the study raises concerns that the PPP approach may not be effective in addressing the real challenges in delivering quality education in Pakistan, and may instead risk deepening economic and gender inequality by creating greater disparities in educational access and outcomes.

Role of the World Bank in the Punjab PPP

While the Punjab provincial government is the primary funder, the PPP has also been supported by several donors including the World Bank, as part of its broader series of loans to the provincial government for education totalling $1 billion since 2009.[122] While the project documents are clear that World Bank loans have directly supported the PEF PPP program, they do not provide a specific amount—it is also clear that a substantial portion of this funding has gone to supporting public education provision, for example through a focus on improving management of and professional development for teachers, improving assessment data, and institutional management and capacity-building.[123]

In contrast to the concerns raised by this research, the World Bank has promoted the initiative as a success to be replicated by other countries, citing evaluations that find improved test scores and increased enrollment. For example, a World Bank evaluation of the Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS) program supported by PEF found that the program's design of linking the per-student subsidy to student learning was successful at pushing the schools to perform better, as measured by student performance on a standardized test—though it did not study the factors that may have led to this outcome, or whether inequality of access was affected. The FAS program features prominently in the World Bank's SABER policy advice framework as a model to emulate, and the Bank seems set to continue supporting the PEF PPP program. Recently, Punjab province announced that it will no longer open new public schools, but will instead expand schooling through a PEF program in which public schools are handed over to private operators.

COMMON THEMES ACROSS THE TWO CASE STUDIES

A number of findings are consistent across the two studies. Both find that the PPP model may not be reducing inequalities or increasing equal and inclusive access to schooling. Instead, they find that the programs disproportionately exclude the poorest children, those who are out-of-school, and those with disabilities. High costs—including non-formal charges levied by schools—contribute to this exclusion. While the studies found differing impacts on girls' enrollment, with more concern raised about enrollment disparities in the Pakistan context, both found that high dropout rates for girls were a problem.

Interestingly, neither of these World Bank-supported PPP programs are implementing policy approaches recommended by the SABER framework that are supposed to make private education more equitable (see next section). In Punjab, there are no restrictions on student screening and selection by schools, and this practice is clearly rampant—driven by incentives inherent in the results-based funding model. In both Pakistan and Uganda, the PPP programs do not formally allow fees, but in practice the private schools in both programs, which are operating with very low resources, demand additional financial contributions from families.

The low-resource model of LFPS proved to negatively impact education quality in both programs. Both studies find a reliance on unqualified and poorly trained teachers, high teacher turnover, and poorly resourced facilities, due to a lack of funding and a profit orientation. Finally, there are consistent findings about a lack of adequate regulation of PPP schools and non-existent mechanisms for community oversight and accountability. Both studies raise questions about the longer-term sustainability of the programs and the role of donors like the World Bank—an institution tasked with fighting poverty and inequality, and achieving global education goals—in advocating for policies with such concerning effects on educational inequality.

More independent studies are needed to assess the impacts of education programs supported by the World Bank and other donors, particularly of their role in providing financing and advice on PPPs in specific country contexts.

4 THE WORLD BANK'S SUPPORT FOR PPPS IN EDUCATION

This report focuses on the role of the World Bank because of the institution's broad influence in setting education policy agendas, both in countries and globally. This influence is channeled not just through its publications and "knowledge products," as previously discussed, but also through its policy advice to governments, its public sector financing in low- and middle-income countries, and its private sector investments. It also influences the thinking of other donors.

Importantly, the World Bank has committed itself to achieving global education and anti-poverty goals. It is one of the key multilateral institutions tasked with helping to finance and implement the education Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) as well as the broader SDG agenda globally. Through its own corporate goals to end extreme poverty and "promote shared prosperity" by 2030, it has committed itself to supporting countries in their poverty and inequality reduction efforts, for which it rightly sees education as an important tool. Along with the IMF, it also influences country policy-makers, particularly finance ministries, in their policy decisions on revenue raising and spending priorities.

The recent World Bank effort to promote investments in human development is a potentially important shift for the Bank, which has historically recommended limiting social sector investments in favor of efficiency, cost-recovery, and austerity, and a greater focus on the "productive" sectors. Its new Human Capital Index, which is designed to drive competition among countries in education and health outcomes, is part of an effort to make the case to finance ministries that these social sectors merit focus and investment because they yield concrete gains for productivity and economic growth. Convincing ministries of finance has been a crucial challenge for education financing in many countries, so this is an important message.

However, an overemphasis on the economic goal of creating more productive and skilled workers through a focus on human "capital" problematically conceives of humans as mere instruments of the productive process rather than as rights-holders, and risks reducing the purpose of education to the achievement of a narrow set of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy. While these skills are a crucial foundation for learning and must be vigorously pursued, too much focus on the economic rationale may shape the Bank's policy and financing priorities. For example, it may lead the Bank to promote policies that narrow the curriculum, minimize "inputs" such as qualified teachers, and police outcomes through standardized testing. Education must also be about achieving and enabling a broader set of human rights and capabilities, building active citizens, empowering women and girls, and forging more cohesive and equal societies. It is also important to understand the Bank's human capital focus in the context of the WDR 2018's message that increased financing for education improves outcomes only under certain specific policy conditions. Instead, the Bank should advocate for adequate financing as a crucial but insufficient precondition for improving the provision of education in lower-income countries and fostering meaningful human development.

“Private sector first”: a new development agenda

The World Bank’s new “Maximizing Finance for Development” (MFD)[124] agenda redefines its approach to development finance by aligning Bank strategies and staff incentives with the goal of crowding-in private finance to meet development goals. Agreed as an approach for all the multilateral development banks during the 2017 G20 meeting in Hamburg, MFD is visualized as a “cascade” in which, first, World Bank staff must ask if the private sector can finance a project independently. If that is not possible, regulatory changes and risk mitigation should be pursued to make investment more desirable, then PPPs should be considered, and finally, purely public finance should be pursued only as a last resort.

While the cascade approach may be appropriate in some areas of the economy and under certain conditions, it is deeply troubling in the social sectors, where “private” finance typically comes from regressive household out-of-pocket spending on school fees and health care. Rhetorically, former World Bank President Jim Yong Kim suggested that applying the MFD approach in sectors like infrastructure will free up scarce public resources for social sector investments like education,[125] but the official documents agreed by the Bank’s Board of Governors paint a different picture: “Only where market solutions are not possible through sector reform and risk mitigation would official and public resources be applied…The approach is currently focused on infrastructure but will be expanded to finance, education, health and agribusiness.”[126]

“Only where market solutions are not possible through sector reform and risk mitigation would official and public resources be applied…The approach is currently focused on infrastructure but will be expanded to… education [and] health.”

– World Bank Development Committee

This is a sweeping and significant shift that portends both a potential increase in direct private education investments through the IFC, for example, expanding its portfolio of investments in commercial schools—but also an intentional and strategic increase in its support for education PPPs through the Bank’s public sector lending arms.

WORLD BANK POLICY ADVICE ON EDUCATION: SABER’S ADVOCACY FOR PPPS

For this report, Oxfam conducted a new analysis of the World Bank’s program for providing policy advice in education related to the role of the private sector: the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). Developed following the adoption of the World Bank’s 10-year education strategy in 2010, SABER is designed to fulfill several functions: it is meant to be a global knowledge base on “what works” in education, based on the Bank’s assessment of the global evidence; it is a tool to benchmark country education systems against “international best practice” in these areas; and finally, it is a mechanism to provide advice to countries in line with this best practice.

SABER includes 13 thematic domains covering a range of topics affecting education systems, such as teachers, finance, assessments, and—importantly—the role of private education providers, called “Engaging the Private Sector” (SABER-EPS). According to the Bank, SABER tools have been applied in over 130 countries.[127] The program is part of the World Bank’s Education Global Practice, but its activities are supported by the SABER Umbrella Facility, a multi-donor trust fund that receives funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and DFID.[128]

SABER-EPS is informed by a 2014 framework paper that discusses the global evidence base, defines policy goals for governments and, based on this, creates a "diagnostic tool" with a rubric that rates country education systems according to their maturity level, from "latent" to "advanced," across a number of indicators.

Oxfam's analysis of the SABER-EPS program finds that it is actively advising countries to expand the role of the private sector in basic education provision, through public funding of private schools as well as reforms that reduce regulatory barriers and incentivize private sector expansion, including the growth of for-profit schools. A specific analysis of the SABER-EPS framework finds that its goals and indicators likewise steer governments toward various PPP approaches. Table 1 describes the set of policy goals and indicators used in the SABER-EPS rubric to benchmark countries against what the Bank considers to be best practice, and highlights Oxfam's concerns.

Oxfam's analysis finds the World Bank is actively advising countries to expand private education provision through PPPs, reduce regulations and encourage the expansion of for-profit schools.

Table 1: SABER "international best practice" in engaging the private sector

*Direct policy advocacy for PPPs highlighted in yellow *

SABER policy goal	Indicators used to benchmark best practice in country policy (summarized)	Oxfam analysis
Encouraging innovation by providers	All decisions about teaching are made at the school level. Teacher qualification standards, salaries, appointment, and dismissal are set at the school level, as well as class size, curriculum delivery, and budget management.	Concern: While some aspects of school autonomy may be appropriate, this reduces the important role of the state in regulating aspects of private school quality and labor rights, such as requiring that teachers meet minimum certification standards and are paid fairly. Limits collective bargaining of teachers.
Holding schools accountable	Government sets learning standards, students are required to take standardized examinations, school performance leads to rewards or escalating sanctions, government inspects schools, schools report on use of public funds.	Concern: No discussion of democratic or social accountability. "Reward and sanction" test-based accountability risks creating incentives for schools to select better-off students and exclude poor and marginalized students, encourages "teaching-to-the-test" and a narrowing of curricula.
Empowering all parents, students, and communities	Government creates the environment for greater school choice, by providing "demand-side" funding for low-income families to attend private school, whether through cash transfers (vouchers), scholarships, or tax subsidies. It also makes information available about private school performance. When public funding is present, admission processes should not be based on student background; school fees should not be charged.	Concern: **Directly advocates for a PPP approach via public funding for private school tuition (demand-side PPP). Overlooks evidence about negative inequality impacts of market-based competition and demand-side PPP approaches.** While non-selectivity and elimination of fees are important principles, there is little evidence about whether these mitigate equity concerns in a PPP setting.
Promoting diversity of supply	Governments facilitate market entry for a more diverse set of private providers, increasing competition and choice. All types of providers, including commercial and for-profit schools, are allowed. Certification standards and regulatory fees do not prohibit market entry. Government provides incentives for market entry such as access to start-up funding, public land, and public buildings. When publicly funded, private schools receive equivalent funding to public schools, and funding is increased to meet student needs; there are no limits on the number, student enrollment, or location of privately managed schools.	Concern: **Ignores evidence and concerns about commercial private schools. Directly advocates for PPP approach through recommendation that government provides financial incentives to expand private provision through use of public funds and resources, and expansion of publicly funded private schools without caps or limits.** Equivalent funding drains resources for public schools and belies the claim that PPPs are more cost-effective. Advocates for reduction of important state role in regulating quality in private schools through reduced school certification process.

Source: Author's analysis based on: World Bank Group (2014) SABER-EPS Framework Paper, *What Matters Most for Engaging the Private Sector in Education*.

The framework paper asserts that its goal is not to advocate for private schooling, "but simply to guide governments that are currently utilizing these non-state provision approaches towards effective policy practices." However, this claim is not borne out in its policy goals, indicators, or rubric—nor in its country-specific analysis and recommendations—which broadly encourage countries to take action to expand the role of private education providers in their education systems.

An example can be seen in the SABER-EPS policy goal of "promoting diversity of supply," which is itself clearly focused on expanding private provision. Country progress toward this and other goals is benchmarked in SABER's rubric. On the issue of schooling type, the rubric makes a clear value judgment that gives a higher score to countries whose laws do not prohibit for-profit or commercial schools from operating. This is highly concerning given that such prohibitions are a common restriction in many countries' legal frameworks and are important in protecting education as a public good, as highlighted recently by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.[129]

Instead of engaging substantively with what it calls "legitimate concerns" raised regarding private involvement in education, the framework accepts the growth of private schooling as inevitable, proactively encourages this growth, and simply plans to "assist governments in counteracting the key concerns regarding private education." But there is little evidence that these mitigation strategies are effective.

SABER policy advice in countries

Building on its framework paper, SABER-EPS has conducted intensive work in 10 countries, developing country-specific reports that make use of its benchmarking rubric and other diagnostic tools such as country surveys. The country reports analyze laws, policies, and regulations governing independent and government-funded private schools, and make recommendations on how countries can follow the "international best practice" defined by the SABER-EPS framework. On the whole, SABER country reports advocate for an increased role for private schools in country education systems, and fail to discuss trade-offs and negative impacts for the funding and sustainability of public schools.

SABER country reports advocate for an increased role for private schools in education systems, while failing to discuss tradeoffs for the funding and sustainability of public schools.

Box 5: World Bank SABER policy advice in countries: promoting PPPs

SABER's advocacy for the expansion of PPPs and other forms of private education provision is clear in its country-based analysis and policy advice. For example:

- In **Zambia**, SABER recommends that the government consider initial funding for government-funded private schools in areas with high out-of-school populations, rather than expand public schools in such areas. It also suggests a results-based incentive system that ties funding for private schools to test-based outcomes, modeled on the Foundation Assisted Schools (FAS) program in Punjab, Pakistan (see section 3 for discussion and concerns).[130]
- In **Nepal**, SABER recommends that the government include for-profit schools in government funding of post-primary private schools, which is currently not allowed. It also recommends incentivizing the expansion of private provision by providing start-up funding or public land/buildings to promote increased supply in underserved areas, as well as providing means-tested or poverty-targeted scholarships to enable lower-income students to attend private independent schools.[131]

- In **Ghana**, SABER recommends piloting PPPs (in Kasoa municipality), as well as targeting public resources to low-income students through vouchers, cash transfers, or scholarships. It also recommends reducing standards for teacher certification in private schools, even though only one-third of teachers are currently required to be certified.[132]
- In **Nigeria**, SABER recommends that the "Lagos State government could empower poorer households at a relatively low cost by targeting resources, via vouchers or conditional cash transfers, to less affluent families to enable their children to access quality education services [in private schools]." [133]

Concerns with SABER-EPS: selective evidence base, flawed assumptions

The SABER-EPS framework fails to engage adequately with the evidence base on PPPs which, as previously discussed, is mixed on outcomes but raises consistent concerns about educational inequalities. Instead it relies on a heavily self-referential set of studies, relegating critical studies and voices to a short section, and relying generally on a selective reading of the evidence. It makes sweeping assumptions about the desirability of greater private sector provision—including diversity of supply, the role of choice and competition in driving up quality and increasing the accountability of schools, and that government regulation hinders school innovation. By contrast, the World Bank's recent WDR on education takes a much more balanced view, describing the potential benefits, risks, and trade-offs of a PPP approach.

Specific concerns about the SABER-EPS framework include the following:

- **Inadequate attention to equity and inequalities:** SABER largely fails to ask questions about the inequality impacts of PPP policies in practice, and relies on assumptions about equity rather than ensuring that equity and poverty impacts are assessed in the World Bank research and evaluation agenda. Some of the indicators promote *more equitable approaches within a PPP model*, for example, by recommending that publicly funded private schools not be allowed to charge fees, and recommending against student selection. But this ignores the body of evidence about the education PPP model (see section 1), which generally associates it with student segregation and socioeconomic stratification, including in systems that do not charge fees or formally allow for student selection. Furthermore, SABER provides no discussion of how systems should be structured to prevent student selection and exclusion, to mitigate strong inherent incentives for "cream-skimming" in test-based funding models, for example, or how to get around schools "gaming" the system or simply disregarding program restrictions, as in Uganda and Argentina.[134]
- **Gender-blind:** The SABER program more generally lacks a domain or cross-cutting theme on gender. Specifically, SABER is surprisingly gender-blind in the private sector domain, failing to consider or grapple with the differential impacts of private provision on women and girls. It fails to discuss the clear evidence on the harmful role of school fees (present in systems with expansion of independent private schools, for which it advocates) or the evidence that private schools are not equally accessed by girls and boys. It also fails to consider the impact of poor pay and working conditions on female teachers and on gender inequality.

SABER fails to consider the differential impacts of private provision on women and girls, or the evidence that private schools are not equally accessed by girls and boys.

- **Erosion of funding for public schools:** Targeted subsidies to low-income households—such as vouchers, cash transfers, and scholarships to attend private schools—are framed as redistributive mechanisms to promote equity. The SABER-EPS framework fails to consider the impact of these subsidies in draining available funding for public schools, which are financially stressed in most lower-income countries, and the potential for erosion of education quality across the system, particularly for the poorest children when they are left in neglected public schools. SABER also fails to take into account the strong evidence around the difficulty of successfully targeting people living in poverty through means testing and other methods, and the reality that vouchers and subsidies therefore often fail to reach the poorest people.[135] This focus on targeting contradicts the Bank's commitment to achieving universal education as defined in the education SDG.

- **Promotion of for-profit schools:** SABER fails to address concerns in the literature about commercial schools and the inherent conflicts or trade-offs between business growth and private returns, and education quality and equity; the impact of commercial interests in the sector; or of these schools' track record in avoiding government quality standards and regulations.
- **Lack of consultation:** While the commitment to making the SABER data and analysis publicly available is important and laudable, there has been a lack of adequate consultation on the content of the framework and rubric with external stakeholders, including civil society organizations, especially those in countries where the tools are being applied.

SABER-EPS and the SABER program more broadly require urgent attention and scrutiny, particularly given that "SABER plays an important role in the World Bank's operational work with country clients," and in light of the Bank's intentions to "further institutionalize and operationalize SABER within the Education Global Practice."[136] The current formulation of SABER's private sector domain is insufficiently evidence-based, while carrying high risks of increasing inequality and exclusion in education systems through its promotion of PPPs and an expanded private market for education. It is therefore unlikely to be helping the World Bank to achieve its twin goals of ending poverty and increasing shared prosperity, and should undergo dramatic changes—or be discarded completely.

SABER's private sector domain is insufficiently evidence-based, while carrying high risks of increasing inequality and exclusion in education systems through its promotion of PPPs and an expanded private market for education.

THE WORLD BANK'S EDUCATION FINANCING: GROWING SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLING

The World Bank is the largest external funder of education in developing countries, through the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), its public sector financing arms for low- and middle-income countries.[137] The Bank has managed a portfolio of $17 billion over the last decade in IDA funding, which provides concessional loans and grants to low-income countries.[138] The Bank also managed $3.3 billion in Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grants during the same period (of which a quarter was co-financing for IDA operations), and it currently implements over 75 percent of GPE funds.[139] Its support for education is therefore important and influential.

The World Bank has also increased its support for private education companies in recent years through the IFC, which currently has an active portfolio of about $700 million in education investments.[140] A recent study by RESULTS Educational Fund found that IFC investments in direct provision of K–12 (primary and secondary) education quadrupled in the period between 2011 and 2015 as compared to the previous five-year period (from 2006–2010).[141] It found that these investments increasingly target low- and lower-middle-income groups, and that they are increasingly in commercial school chains.[142] This includes the IFC's investment in the controversial for-profit school chain Bridge International Academies. Given the

IFC investments in direct provision of private education quadrupled during 2011–2015 as compared to the previous five-year period.

concerns about gender equity in private schools, these investments appear to contradict the Bank's stated commitments to girls' education and gender equality,[143] as well as its significant public sector funding for girls education.[144]

A substantial part of the World Bank's education funding for governments goes to strengthen and expand the provision of public education. This critically important support helps countries raise urgently needed additional resources for education. The World Bank often asserts that 95 percent of its portfolio supports public education, and that a relatively small amount goes to the private sector.[145] However, it cannot be assumed that all IDA and IBRD funding for governments is necessarily supporting public education delivery. Given the concerns about PPPs in education, as well the World Bank's substantial role in financing country education systems, it is important to understand the extent to which the Bank is supporting private education provision through its public sector funding.

World Bank funding support for PPPs: a portfolio review

To understand how the Bank's education portfolio is changing, and the nature and types of its investments in PPP approaches, Oxfam conducted a review of IDA and IBRD funding for primary and secondary education over the last six years, covering 116 projects. This builds on a review of Bank financing for education PPPs in a 2014 study by Mundy and Menashy, which also analyzed Bank policy analysis and support.[146] Mundy and Menashy reviewed 59 projects between FY 2008 and FY 2012, finding Bank support for PPPs through 10 projects in seven countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nepal, Haiti, and Uganda. The 116 projects reviewed by Oxfam included all projects approved from July 2012 through October 2018 (FY 2013 through first quarter FY 2019). Oxfam analyzed the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) for each project to identify any components supporting private provision of education.[147]

Oxfam's review shows that over a fifth of World Bank education projects between 2013 and 2018 included support to governments for private provision of education.

Of the 116 projects reviewed, 26 included direct support for private provision, 22 percent of the total.[148] These projects were located in 14 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Senegal, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Philippines, and Haiti (see Annex for list of projects and descriptions). While five of these countries appeared in the Mundy and Menashy study, nearly all of the nine countries unique to our study are in sub-Saharan Africa—seven in total. The Philippines and Afghanistan are new to this group as well. Some countries had multiple Bank projects with support for private provision, including five in Bangladesh.[149] The Gambia followed with three projects, and several other countries had two. It is not possible to report data about financing volumes, as this support is often one component of a larger project for which specific funding amounts are not always disclosed.

Over the last six years we found that the number of projects supporting private education provision has been gradually increasing (see Figure 1). This increase can also be observed over the last eleven years when including data since FY 2008 from the previous study (Figure 2). In order to assess trends, we conducted a comparison of the previous five-year period studied by Mundy and Menashy with data from the last five years (FY 2014–2018). We found that 21 percent of projects in the last five years included direct support for private provision (20 of 94 projects), compared to 17 percent in the earlier five-year period (FY 2008–2012)— representing a modest increase. A more dramatic increase was seen in the number of countries hosting such projects—an increase from seven to 13.

Figure 1: World Bank projects supporting private provision of education, 2013–2018

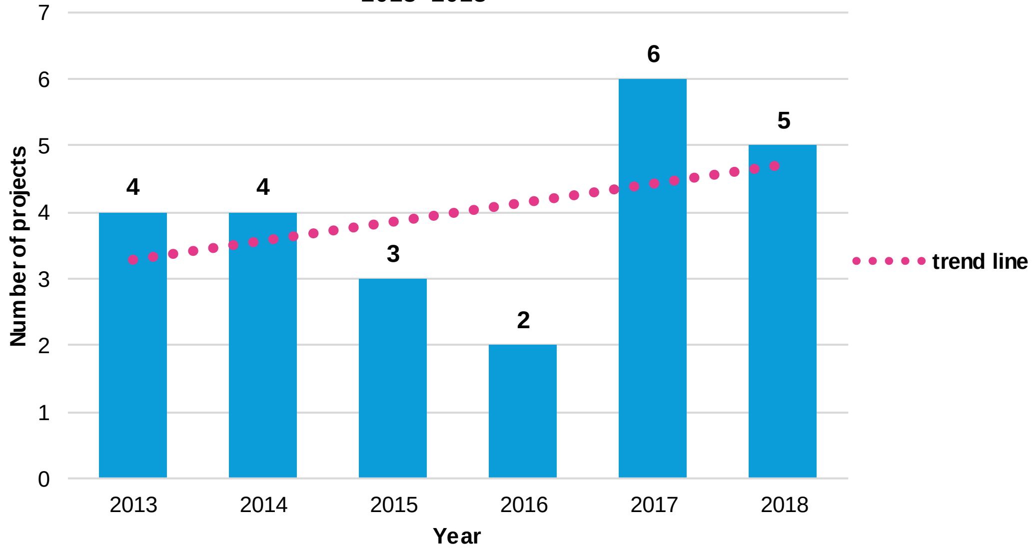

Figure 1: Source: Oxfam portfolio review (for World Bank FY 2013–2018).

Figure 2: World Bank projects supporting private provision of education (excluding budget support), FY 2008–2018

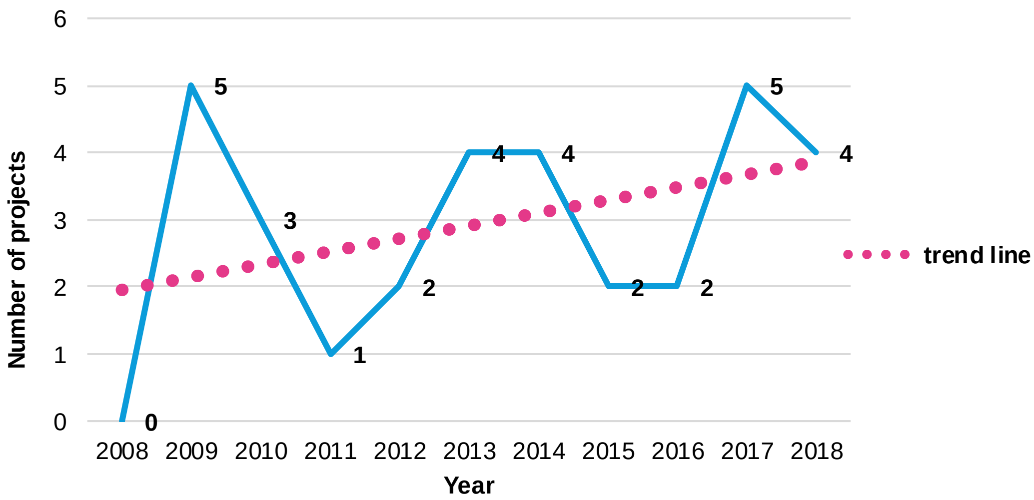

Figure 2: Source: Oxfam portfolio review (for World Bank FY 2013–2018); for FY 2008–2012, data from Mundy and Menashy (2014). Note: budget support operations (Development Policy Loans, or DPLs) have been removed from Oxfam's sample for this graph to ensure comparability with the previous study, which did not include DPLs.

The most prevalent forms of support in our review were "supply-side" mechanisms such as grants or subsidies made directly to private providers with the aim of increasing the availability (supply) of private school seats for certain populations, such as low-income students. These were featured in 22 of the 116 projects. In Nepal, for example, a project supported grants to private religious schools as well as "unaided" community schools.[150] A Bank operation in the Philippines was part of a series that conditioned its funding on the expansion of the Education Services Contracting program, which provides private schools with a per-student subsidy for enrolling youth from low-income households.[151] One of the projects with the most comprehensive support for private provision was in Burkina Faso, supporting the construction of new and expansion of existing private secondary schools (see Annex).[152]

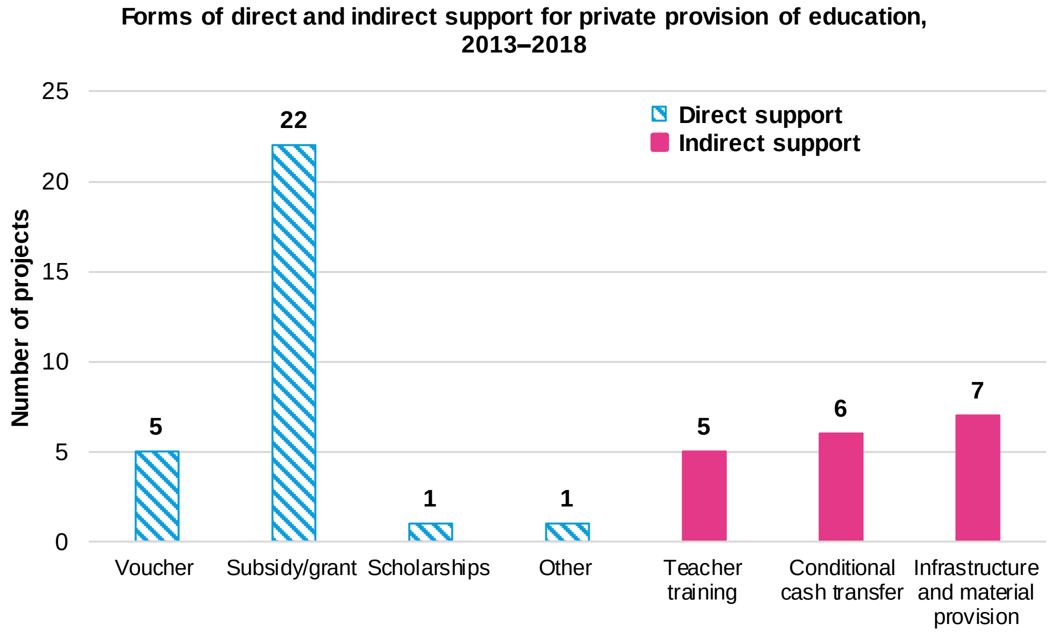

Figure 3: This chart shows the frequency of occurrence of different forms of direct and indirect support for private provision revealed in the review. One project may be represented in multiple columns. Source: Oxfam portfolio review (for years 2013–2018).

A number of projects explicitly supported grants to religious schools (Sierra Leone, Senegal, the Gambia, Nepal, Nigeria, and DRC). In some instances, such as in the Gambia and Nigeria,[153] funding to Koranic religious schools was conditioned on the incorporation into school curricula of secular topics such as numeracy and literacy. While these projects were included as examples of support for private provision in this review, some are distinct from more typical public funding of private schools in their objectives and approach. For example, three projects in the Gambia incentivized these additions to curricula by providing cash transfers directly to participating teachers. The PADs framed this as support for teachers' education-related expenses.

Six projects included "demand-side" mechanisms such as vouchers or scholarships for students or families to cover tuition or other education expenses in private schools. Two of these were part of a series of operations in Cote d'Ivoire that require and support the establishment of a "pilot voucher program" for disadvantaged children to attend private or public schools. The program was described as an effort to promote efficiency by providing funding to the families of students to attend schools as opposed to providing it directly to the private schools, as it had done in the past.[154] A project in Bangladesh includes an "allowance scheme," similar to a cash transfer, for students enrolled in non-formal "Learning Centers" and meeting various criteria to use for tuition and other school expenses, as well as a pilot voucher program for child domestic workers who are out of school.[155]

A series of operations in Cote d'Ivoire requires and supports the establishment of a pilot voucher program for disadvantaged children to attend private or public schools.

Some projects financed a more limited activity or set of activities supporting private provision of education that our review considered "indirect" (see Figure 4.) This included activities such as training private school teachers, providing conditional cash transfers to families for enrolling students in both public and private schools, or the provision of infrastructure or teaching materials for private schools. Our study identified eight projects that only provide indirect support and were therefore excluded from our total count of projects providing direct support. Many projects that provide direct support also feature forms of indirect support.

Some instances of support for private provision may be appropriate for the context, or may be continuing a legacy system. For example, a series of projects in Bangladesh continue a historical tradition of grant-aided private secondary schools. In conflict-affected states such as Afghanistan and the DRC, where public education infrastructure or capacity may be lacking due to years of conflict, it may be appropriate to support the provision of education through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and religious schools for some period of time, as the Bank has done.[156] But a longer-term strategy for establishing a robust public education system in these contexts must also be an important aim of World Bank aid for education, and is aligned with the Bank's development mandate—however, this is not always apparent. There may also be trade-offs with support and funding for public schools in these contexts. While another recent program in Bangladesh provides crucial new funding to support education for the displaced Rohingya population in Cox's Bazaar, the project document also acknowledges the lack of formal public primary schools in the area pre-dating the influx of refugees; the program, in its expansion of informal non-public Learning Centers, does not address this wider problem.[157]

In other contexts, the Bank's support to governments to expand privately provided education appears to be a more proactive policy choice, which may also aim to grow the "market" for education, including through support for LFPS. This is certainly the case in Pakistan, where the series of PPP programs in Punjab (see section 3) and Sindh provinces explicitly aim to expand access to low-fee private education for low-income students.[158] The voucher programs previously mentioned also raise these concerns. In Haiti, the Bank supports a program that funds LFPS through tuition-waiver vouchers, raising questions about why the program did not instead help the government to build up its public education infrastructure and develop a longer-term strategy for its public schooling system.[159] In Burkina Faso, the Bank is supporting what appears to be a new approach to expand existing and build new private secondary schools and providing financial support for them to enroll poor students, potentially creating trade-offs with the country's need for public secondary schools.[160]

In Burkina Faso, the Bank is supporting a new approach to expand existing and build new private secondary schools, while providing financial support to enroll poor students.

Given the difficulty of accurate means testing in such contexts, questions are also raised about the ability to accurately target the poorest students for tuition subsidies and ensure they are truly benefitting from these programs. A number of other projects incorporate this approach, including in Cote d'Ivoire, India, and the Philippines, which raises potential concerns about educational inequality and comes into conflict with the emphasis on universal education in the SDGs.

Despite the Bank's promotion of PPPs in policy documents and in some of the projects described here, several PADs included strong arguments in favor of public provision in their economic rationale for public financing. One example is the Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers Program in Uganda:

> "Health and education expenditures fund public goods and are therefore appropriately publicly funded. The vast majority of countries in the world recognize this. The provision of basic health and education services benefits not only recipients of these services but also others and the nation as a whole […] Private provision of these services is not feasible, particularly in the areas that are most in need of better social services because people in these areas do not have the resources to fund basic social services."[161]

This is noteworthy, given the Bank's previous support for private secondary schooling in Uganda (see case study in section 3). Another example, from Tanzania, provides a useful summary of the arguments made in support of public provision in other PADs: "There is strong rationale for public provision of quality education at primary and secondary levels. In Tanzania, government intervention in the education sector is strongly justified on the grounds of public good, externality, equity, and efficiency."[162] Statements like these may reveal tensions at country level with the Bank's support for PPPs as part of its broader education policy agenda.

While Oxfam's review finds an increase in World Bank support for private provision of education, it is clear that not all of this funding is a product of market-oriented policies intended to expand low-fee private education or other forms of private provision. It is also difficult to directly attribute this growth to the World Bank generally or specifically to SABER-EPS policy advice, since Bank programs are supposed to be country-driven and reflective of country priorities in the education sector. Indeed, many governments may well prefer to invest public resources in public education, despite the Bank's advice.[163] It is also important to recognize that a majority of the World Bank's portfolio still supports public provision of education, and the Bank continues to play a crucial role in financing public education globally.

Nevertheless, our review finds that the share of total education projects supporting private provision is significant and growing. This is a cause for concern, given the poor track record of PPPs on inequality. Not only has the Bank continued to support PPPs in places such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, where it has played a role for some time, it has expanded the geographical range of this support, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This trend also broadly coincides with the adoption of the SABER-EPS framework in 2014 and dissemination activities in countries over subsequent years, particularly in Africa. This suggests that SABER-EPS guidance and other World Bank policy messages may be having an impact on policy choices in some countries—underscoring the importance of overhauling SABER-EPS. As the World Bank is the Grant Agent for a majority of GPE grants, this influence is doubly concerning.

It is important to consider these trends alongside the recent sharp increase in IFC funding for commercial private schools in low- and middle-income countries, as cited previously. Taken as a whole, this World Bank support has important implications for the evolution of public education systems, as well as for equality of education outcomes in countries around the world—and it therefore deserves more scrutiny.

5 CONCLUSION

TOWARD TRANSFORMATIVE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Despite impressive global progress on education over the last several decades, pressing challenges remain in improving access and learning, and mobilizing adequate resources. However, this report finds that education PPPs are not a shortcut to success, and that their claimed benefits amount to false promises. A growing body of academic evidence shows that PPPs do not consistently deliver better education outcomes and at the same time are deepening inequality in education. Particular concerns are raised by market-oriented approaches that fund for-profit private schools or seek to expand competitive markets for education, creating incentives for exclusion and socioeconomic segregation. Low-fee private schools have been shown to disproportionately exclude girls and exploit the labor rights of teachers, who are predominently women in many countries.

However, this report finds that the World Bank is actively advising countries to adopt a PPP approach in education and expand the role of private education provision through its SABER policy advice. Oxfam's research also finds the World Bank's financing portfolio for this approach, while still modest, is significant and growing. Case studies from Uganda and Pakistan highlight the Bank's instrumental role in supporting the expansion of private education provision through its policy advice and lending. Taken together with increased direct funding of commercial schools through the IFC, these trends are cause for deep concern.

Education is a fundamental human right and a key building block of equal societies. It is crucial for inclusive economic growth, but the public purpose of education goes beyond an economic rationale: it is about empowering active citizens, challenging harmful gender norms and advancing gender equality, fostering social cohesion, preserving communities and the environment, and ultimately, it is about equalizing the playing field so that all people can realize their full human potential. This kind of transformative public education requires political commitment and adequate financial investment—especially in a professional teaching workforce, the facilities and materials to enable holistic learning to take place, and accountable systems for oversight and democratic participation. Above all, it requires a commitment to equality.

A market-oriented model of education provision reduces this fundamental human right to a commodity that can be bought and sold for the cheapest price. As seen in this report, education PPPs risk further stratifying and segregating our education systems and our societies. They take funding and attention away from public education. Governments and societies around the world must turn away from these policies and recommit to the public purpose of education.

Recommendations

The World Bank and other development actors should stop promoting education PPPs and refocus funding and effort on improving the provision of public schooling in developing countries. All actors must ensure that their efforts are compatible with the progressive realization of the right to education and gender equality.

The World Bank Group should:

- Cease its advocacy and funding for market-oriented education PPPs, especially those that support low-fee and commercial private schools. It should fully deliver on its gender commitments in education, including by ceasing support for LFPS.
- **The World Bank (IDA and IBRD)** should redouble its focus on supporting governments to strengthen public education provision. All funding for education must uphold the right to education and gender equality as outlined in international human rights frameworks. It should support governments to mobilize tax revenues in a progressive and participatory way.
- **SABER-Engaging the Private Sector** should be done away with, or fundamentally redesigned to ensure that countries are provided with a balanced assessment of the risks of expanded private sector provision of education, including PPPs, and consider gender impacts.
- **The Maximizing Finance for Development agenda** should explicitly exclude social services, including education, from its “private sector first” financing approach.
- **The International Finance Corporation (IFC)** should cease its funding of commercial private schools at the basic (K–12) level, and focus on other non-provision investments.
- **The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG)** should conduct an evaluation of the equity and inequality impacts of World Bank support for education PPPs, including the SABER-EPS program.

The **Global Partnership for Education** should:

- Focus its financing on support for government efforts to improve the quality and reach of public education provision. GPE should not fund market-oriented education PPPs, especially those that support low-fee and commercial private schools.
- Avoid co-financing any World Bank program that includes support for market-oriented PPPs in education, and avoid the use of the SABER framework in guiding its own support and policy analysis.

Governments should:

- Devote the maximum available resources to public education including at least six percent of GDP and 20 percent of national budgets, and urgently reform tax systems to build stronger and more progressive tax revenues to invest in education and other public services.
- Avoid diverting scarce public resources and attention away from the essential task of building good-quality, inclusive public schools that are free and accessible for all students.
- Ensure adequately and equitably financed public schools of good quality; eliminate school fees and other costs for families; increase the professionalization of the teaching workforce and improve teacher training; improve the inclusion of girls and students with disabilities; and ensure spaces for active citizen engagement and democratic oversight of schools.

- Ensure adequate regulation of private education providers, especially commercial schools, to ensure that education quality and standards are being upheld. Safeguard the labor rights of teachers, especially female teachers, in the low-fee private sector.

All donors should:

- Substantially increase their aid commitments to education, especially to basic education and in countries with the greatest needs, in order to ensure that countries are able to devote sufficient resources to build quality public education provision.
- Cease funding and promoting market-oriented PPPs, especially those that support low-fee and commercial private schools. Stop directly funding commercial private schools through their private finance arms.
- Donors to the World Bank should insist, including through IDA replenishment, that Bank efforts support improvement and expansion of public education delivery, and cease support for market-based PPPs, low-fee, and commercial private schools.
- Work together with developing countries to agree international tax reforms to end harmful tax competition and help countries build the revenues they need to invest in education and other public services.

ANNEX 1

World Bank education projects with support for private provision of education, FY 2013–first quarter FY 2019

Project details	Element supporting private education provision
Afghanistan EQRA (Education) Project 2019	This project includes support for the improvement and expansion of Community Based Education, a form of non-public education, in remote and conflict-affected areas. The project provides support to schools for contract teachers, learning materials, and other education services.[164]
Bangladesh Reaching Out of School Children II 2013	This project includes support for non-formal primary-level Learning Centers through grants, and provides education allowances to out-of-school children to cover the costs of schooling, including tuition fees. It also supports a pilot voucher scheme for out-of-school child domestic workers in urban areas.[165]
Bangladesh Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP)—Additional Financing 2014	This project extends and provides additional financing for the original SEQAEP project, which supports a secondary school system dominated by both religious and secular government-aided private schools.[166]
Bangladesh Quality Learning for All Program 2018	This project supports the government's Primary Education Development Program 4 initiative (PEDP4); objectives include enrolling out-of-school children in informal Learning Centers, a form of non-public primary school.[167]
Bangladesh Transforming Secondary Education for Results Operation 2018	This project provides performance-based grants to secondary schools. It supports a secondary education system dominated by government-aided private schools.[168]
Bangladesh Additional Financing for Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) II 2019	This project provides additional financing for the ROSC II project, expanding it to provide education for the displaced Rohingya population. It extends the use of informal Learning Centers (non-public schools) in the Cox's Bazaar area for host and refugee populations.[169]
Burkina Faso Education Access and Quality Improvement Project (EAQIP) 2015	This project includes support for the construction of new private schools and expansion of existing private schools. The Ministry of Secondary and Tertiary Education leases ownership and management to private providers who receive financial support to enroll poor students.[170]
Cote d'Ivoire First Fiscal Management, Education and Energy Reforms Development Policy Financing 2017	This operation includes support for a pilot voucher program for children from disadvantaged households for use in private or public schools. The introduction of this program is one of the triggers for disbursement of funds.[171]
Cote d'Ivoire Second Fiscal Management, Education, Cocoa and Energy Reforms Development Policy Financing 2018	This operation includes support for a pilot voucher program for children from disadvantaged households for use in private or public schools. The introduction of this program is one of the triggers for disbursement of funds.[172]
Democratic Republic of Congo Quality and Relevance of Secondary and Tertiary Education Project 2015	This project includes a component that provides block grants to public secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools. Seventy-six percent of all public secondary schools in DRC are faith-based (private) schools and are eligible to receive these grants.[173]

Democratic Republic of Congo Education Sector Support Project 2016	This project includes a component that provides support for subsidized religious primary schools through teacher training, provision of materials, and physical infrastructure improvements.[174]
The Gambia Results for Education Achievement and Development (READ) Project 2014	This project includes a small component that provides conditional cash transfers to teachers of non-public Koranic schools for teaching literacy and numeracy.[175]
The Gambia READ Project Additional Financing 2017	This project includes a small component that provides conditional cash transfers to teachers at non-public Koranic schools for teaching literacy and numeracy.[176]
The Gambia Education Sector Support Program 2018	This project includes a small component that scales up the existing program of conditional cash transfers for teachers at non-public Koranic schools for teaching literacy and numeracy.[177]
Haiti Additional Financing for Haiti Education for All Project Phase II 2014	This project supports a tuition-waiver program for students to attend non-public schools through the provision of student enrollment grants.[178]
Haiti Providing an Education of Quality in Haiti (PEQH) 2017	This project continues the tuition-waiver program for students to attend non-public schools, and supports the provision of student enrollment grants to Non-Public Primary School Management Committees (NPPSMCs) to finance students' tuition expenses.[179]
India Elementary Education III 2014	This project supports the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act of 2009; the project includes a component that supports government subsidies for private school fees under the specific RTE mandate that all private schools provide 25 percent of their seats in entry classes to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.[180]
Nepal School Sector Reform Program Additional Financing 2013	This project provides additional financing for a project that includes support for grants to traditional (religious) schools and community-based (co-financed) schools.[181]
Nepal School Sector Development Program 2017	This project includes grants to unaided community schools (without government teacher positions or teachers under deputation) to meet teacher salaries and operating expenses, as well as grants to traditional/religious schools.[182]
Nigeria Better Education Service Delivery for All 2017	This project includes support for Almajiri (religious) schools, including for the incorporation of formal basic education subjects in their religious curriculum.[183]
Pakistan Second Sindh Education Sector Project 2013	This project includes support for the Promoting Private Schooling in Rural Sindh (PPRS) program, which provides subsidies to low-fee private school operators in underserved rural communities.[184]
Pakistan Third Punjab Education Sector Project 2016	This project includes support for the Punjab Education Foundation's four PPP programs, which include a voucher program for poor households, and for several other programs that provide subsidies for low-cost private schools based on enrollment.[185]
Philippines Third Philippines Development Policy Loan 2015	This project is part of a series of development policy loans that required and supported the expansion of the Education Service Contracting program, which places poor students in private schools via a per-student subsidy.[186]

Senegal Quality and Equity of Basic Education 2013	This project includes a component that provides grants to support 100 *Daaras* (religious schools) through rehabilitation of infrastructure, teachers' salaries, learning materials, and incentives for the headmaster.[187]
Senegal Quality Improvement and Equity of Basic Education—Additional Financing 2018	This project extends financing for the above project to an additional 400 religious schools.[188]
Sierra Leone Additional Financing of the Revitalizing Education Development in Sierra Leone Project 2017	This project includes support for performance-based grants to primary and junior secondary schools, including mission/religious schools and non-government-funded community schools.[189]

Source: Oxfam portfolio review of World Bank education investments FY 2013–first quarter FY2019 (July 1, 2012– October 31, 2018), based on World Bank projects database.

NOTES

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6 For Liberia (see text box on p. 16); Pakistan (see case study in section 3).

7 See full discussion of the evidence in the main report, which includes: Verger, A. and M. Moschetti (2017) *Public-Private Partnerships as an Education Policy Approach: Multiple Meanings, Risks and Challenges.* Education Research and Foresight Series, No. 19. Paris, UNESCO; Aslam, M., S. Rawal, and S. Saeed. (2017). *Public-Private Partnerships in Education in Developing Countries: A Rigorous Review of the Evidence*. Ark Education Partnerships Group; Baum, D. (2018) *The Effectiveness and Equity of Public-Private Partnerships in Education: A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation of 17 Countries.* Education Policy Analysis Archives Vol. 26, No. 105.

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15 See case study on Pakistan in section 3 of this report.

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65 Ibid.

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104 See *The Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education*, 2019. https://www.abidjanprinciples.org/

105 Romero, M. et.al. (2017) *Can a public-private partnership improve Liberia's schools?* Center for Global Development and Innovations for Poverty Action. https://www.cgdev.org/publication/can-public-private-partnership-improve-liberias-schools

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107 Rumney E. (2016, 31 March). *UN education chief slams Liberia over schools PPP plan*. Public Finance International. https://www.publicfinanceinternational.org/news/2016/03/un-education-chief-slams-liberia-over-schools-ppp-plan

108 See for example, in Bangladesh the nationalization of "Registered Non-Government Primary Schools" which had previously been receiving public subsidies. This program was supported by the World Bank and other donors, as described in: World Bank (2014) *Bangladesh –Third Primary Education Development Program: additional financing*. Project Paper. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/655371468198579903/pdf/908120PJPR0P15010Box385378B00OUO090.pdf

109 All data in the Uganda USE case study, unless otherwise noted, is based on: Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (2016) *A Threat or Opportunity? Public-Private Partnerships in Education in Uganda*, op. cit. The research covered a sample of 28 schools across nine districts, utilizing direct interviews with head teachers and parents, observation of physical facilities, and focus group discussions with community members in study areas; it also employed interviews with ministry officials and a review of key documents and reports.

110 Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (2017) *Accountability In Public Private Partnerships (PPPs): Policy framework and practice in Implementation of PPPs for Uganda's Universal Secondary Education Programme*. Policy Advocacy Brief No. 6. http://iser-uganda.org/images/downloads/Policy_Brief_on_Accountability_by_PPPs.pdf

111 Ibid.

112 This point is elaborated in ISER's follow-up report, ISER (2017), ibid, pp. 24–25 in the discussion of the lack of financial oversight and accountability mechanisms in the PPP program.

113 See data cited in ISER (2017), ibid, based on Directorate of Education Standards (DES) schools inspection reports, NAPE reports and support supervision reports. The National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) reports by UNEB indicate that on average, S2 students in PPP/USE schools show the lowest proficiency in English, mathematics and biology compared to Government Non-USE, Private Non-USE and Government USE schools.

114 Liang, X. (2002) *Uganda Post-primary Education Sector Report.* Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series Africa Region, The World Bank. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/136091468778192584/pdf/267060AFR0Human10Uganda0post1primary.pdf

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117 IFC website (2010), ibid.. See also: https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/ifc-launches-program-increase-access-education-uganda+

118 Press statement, Ministry of Education and Sports, January 31, 2018, published in the *Daily Monitor* print edition, available at: http://iser-uganda.org/images/downloads/News.pdf. This decision was also covered in a previous article in the *Daily Monitor* (January 17, 2018): *Govt to stop funding to 800 private USE schools*. https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Govt-stop-funding-800-private-USE-schools/688334-4266826-15iulss/index.html

119 World Bank (2018). *Uganda Secondary Education Expansion Project* (P166570). Project Information Document/Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet (Report No: PIDISDSC24831) http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/521301533884327735/pdf/Concept-Project-Information-Document-Integrated-Safeguards-Data-Sheet-Uganda-Secondary-Education-Expansion-Project-P166570.pdf.

120 Pakistan Economic Survey (2018) *Pakistan Economic Survey 2017–18*. Islamabad: Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan. http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_18/10-Education.pdf

121 Afridi, M. (2018) *Equity and Quality in an Education Public-Private Partnership: A study of the World Bank-supported PPP in Punjab, Pakistan*, op. cit.. The study was conducted over a period of two months, through field visits in a sample of 31 schools across five districts of Punjab province (in both rural and urban/slum areas) and all four PEF programs. It employs in-depth semi-structured interviews with school principals and owners in the sample, supplemented by focus group discussions with teachers, field observations of sampled schools, and interviews with key stakeholders.

122 Source: World Bank Education Projects Database. http://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/wQueries/qprojects

123 World Bank (2016). *Pakistan: Third Punjab Education Sector Project* (P154524). Project Appraisal Document (Report No: PAD1641). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/967701468198234577/pdf/PAD1641-PAD-P154524-R2016-0090-1-Box394887B-OUO-9.pdf.

124 World Bank Group (undated) Brief: *Maximizing Finance for Development*. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/168331522826993264/pdf/124888-repl-PUBLIC.pdf

125 For example, see World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim's piece in DevEx: *Opinion: Here's how the World Bank is maximizing finance for development*, March 1, 2018. https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-here-s-how-the-world-bank-is-maximizing-finance-for-development-92228

126 World Bank Group Development Committee (2017) *Forward Look—A vision for the World Bank Group in 2030: Progress and Challenges*, op. cit.

127 World Bank Group (2018) *Building Education Systems That Deliver: SABER ANNUAL REPORT 2018 Retrospective Review.* http://wbgfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/Background/SABER_annual_report_2018.pdf

128 Ibid.

129 See report of UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Education (2015) op. cit., pp. 12–19 for discussion of country legal frameworks that limit or prohibit for-profit school operators as well as a recommendation that for-profit schools be prohibited in order to protect education as a public good.

130 World Bank (2016) *Zambia: Engaging the Private Sector in Education.* SABER Country Report. http://wbgfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/CountryReports/EPS/SABER_EPS_Zambia_Country_Report.pdf

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132 See World Bank (2015) *Ghana: Engaging the Private Sector in Education.* SABER Pilot Country Report, op. cit.; see also World Bank (2015) *The role of the private sector in providing basic education services in Kasoa, Ghana*, op. cit.

133 See World Bank (2014) *Lagos, Nigeria: Engaging the Private Sector in Education.* SABER Country Report. http://wbgfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/CountryReports/EPS/Lagos_Nigeria_SABER_EPS_July_2017.pdf; see also World Bank (2015) *The role of the private sector in Lagos, Nigeria.* SABER In-Depth Report. http://wbgfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/CountryReports/EPS/SABER_EPS_Nigeria_in_Depth.pdf

134 Uganda and Argentina are only two such cases. See case study on Uganda in this report for evidence of widespread fee-charging in PPP schools, despite the program's MoU explicitly forbidding this. See also the case of PPP schools in Buenos Aires discussed in Moschetti, M. (2018), op. cit. Despite an explicit policy that prohibits student screening and selection in PPP schools, this study finds evidence that the strategy is widespread.

135 Poverty targeting systems are often ineffective, expensive and plagued with errors in both directions: leaving out those they are intended to benefit, and giving benefits to those not deemed to be in need. See for example: R. Sabates-Wheeler, A. Hurrell, and S. Devereux. (2014). *Targeting social transfer programmes. Comparing design and implementation errors across alternative mechanisms*. WIDER Working Paper. https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/wp2014-040.pdf; S. Kidd (2013) *Rethinking targeting in International Development*. Development Pathways. http://www.developmentpathways.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/11-PathwaysPerspective-Rethinking-Targeting-Kidd.pdf

136 World Bank Group (2018) *Building Education Systems That Deliver: SABER ANNUAL REPORT 2018 Retrospective Review*, op. cit.

137 World Bank Group webpage: *The Global Partnership for Education and the World Bank Group: The Facts*, op. cit. Accessed on December 4, 2018.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 As mentioned in various recent blogs and speeches by IFC and World Bank staff, including the following blog: Sergio Pimenta, March 28, 2017, "Global Youth Urgently Need New Models — Public and Private — for Education and Skills" https://medium.com/@IFC_org/global-youth-urgently-need-new-models-public-and-private-for-education-and-skills-a363f8bed49a

141 Baker, T and W. Smith (2017) op. cit. This figure uses the more conservative figures (excluding Russian investments for school construction), and compares a total of $162.28 million (between 2011–2015) as compared to $38.9 million during the previous five years (2006–2010), an increase of more than four times.

142 Baker, T and W. Smith (2017), ibid.

143 For example, see the World Bank's IDA18 gender commitments, World Bank (2017) Additions to IDA Resources: Eighteenth Replenishment. *Towards 2030: Investing in Growth, Resilience and Opportunity* (pp. 78–80). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/348661486654455091/pdf/112728-correct-file-PUBLIC-Rpt-from-EDs-Additions-to-IDA-Resources-2-9-17-For-Disclosure.pdf

144 For example, see World Bank website: *World Bank Invests US$3.2 Billion in Adolescent Girls' Education in 2 Years*, March 7, 2018. Accessed on April 1, 2019. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/03/07/world-bank-invests-us32-billion-in-adolescent-girls-education-in-2-years

145 For example, see recent IFC blog by Sergio Pimenta, March 28, 2017. *Global Youth Urgently Need New Models — Public and Private — for Education and Skills*. Accessed on April 1, 2019. https://medium.com/@IFC_org/global-youth-urgently-need-new-models-public-and-private-for-education-and-skills-a363f8bed49a

146 Mundy and Menashy (2014), op. cit.

147 Oxfam reviewed 116 publicly disclosed IDA/IBRD projects tagged for the sectors "primary education" and "secondary education" within the Bank's project database. This review included active or closed projects approved between July 1, 2012 and October 31, 2018 (FY 2013 through the first quarter of FY 2019). The analysis included searching the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) of each project for components supporting private provision as previously defined. For each PAD, the project development objectives and outline of project components were reviewed, followed by a search for words associated with private provision, such as private, non-public, nongovernmental, non-state, subsidy, voucher, scholarship, religious, traditional, etc. When evidence of support for private provision was discovered, elements of the support were then documented for further analysis. Efforts were made to be as consistent as possible with the Mundy and Menashy study in order to allow for a look at trends over time. This methodology has limitations, as it is based on an analysis of project documents (rather than interviews or fieldwork), and there are limitations to the level of detail that can be gleaned from the documents, which vary in how specific they are in their modalities of support to various interventions. When interventions were not clear in the documents, we erred on the side of excluding the project from categorization as supporting private education; this may mean that we have underreported the incidence of this support. Education projects often support one part of a much larger government education reform agenda. However, it is not always clear which aspects of a government program are being directly funded by the Bank. When the linkage was not clear, a project was not coded as supporting private provision.

148 See Annex 1 for a list of projects.

149 World Bank (2017) (Approved F Y2018). *Bangladesh: Transforming Secondary Education for Results Operation* (P160943). Project Appraisal Document (Report No: 114568-BD). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/377151513825229495/pdf/Bangladesh-Transforming-114568-BD-PAD-11292017.pdf.

150 World Bank (2017) (Approved FY 2017). *Nepal: School Sector Development Program (SSDP)* (P160748). Project Appraisal Document (Report No: 112198-NP). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/531061491233526126/pdf/NEPAL-PAD-03072017.pdf.

151 World Bank (2014) (Approved FY 2015). *Philippines: Third Philippines Development Policy Loan*, op. cit. See also World Bank (2013) *Second Philippines Development Policy Loan*, op. cit.

152 World Bank (2015) (Approved FY 2015). *Burkina Faso: Education Access and Quality Improvement Project*, op. cit.

153 See Annex 1 for project details.

154 World Bank (2016) (Approved FY2017). *Cote d'Ivoire: First Fiscal Management, Education and Energy Reforms Development Policy Financing* (P158463). Project Appraisal Document (Report No: 108485-CI). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/440131482030088101/pdf/1482030086970-000A10458-Cote-dIvoire-DPO-Series-Program-Document-P158463-Nov-22-2016-11222016.pdf.

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World Bank (2016) (Approved FY 2016). *Democratic Republic of Congo: Education Sector Support Project* (P152910). Project Appraisal Document (Report No: PAD1486). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/188991468185033267/pdf/PAD1486-PAD-P152910-IDA-R2016-0060-1-Box394878B-OUO-9.pdf.

157 World Bank (2018) (Approved FY 2019). *Bangladesh: Additional Financing for Reaching Out-of-School Children Project II* (P167870). Project Appraisal Document (Report No: 3005). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/434911537587044478/pdf/Bangladesh-Reaching-PP-09072018.pdf.

158 World Bank (2013) (Approved FY 2013). *Pakistan: Second Sindh Education Sector Project (P125952).* Project Appraisal Document (Report No: 74552-PK). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/483841468285331285/pdf/745520PAD0P1250Official0Use0Only090.pdf.

World Bank (2016) (Approved FY 2016). *Pakistan: Third Punjab Education Sector Project*, op. cit.

159 World Bank (2016) (Approved FY 2017). *Haiti: Providing an Education of Quality in Haiti (PEQH)* (P155191). Project Appraisal Document (Report No. PAD1690). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/984991478263758814/pdf/1478263764434-000A10458-PAD-10282016.pdf.

160 World Bank (2015). *Burkina Faso: Education Access and Quality Improvement Project*, op. cit.

161 World Bank (2017) (Approved FY 2017). *Uganda: Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers Program* (P160250). Project Appraisal Document (Report No: 114260-UG). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/697291498788132920/pdf/Uganda-PAD-06082017.pdf.

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163 See Mundy and Menashy (2014), op. cit. for a more in-depth discussion of the dynamics that may influence World Bank advice and government policy choices, both at country level and at Bank headquarters.

164 World Bank (2018). *Afghanistan: EQRA Project*, op. cit.

165 World Bank (2012). *Bangladesh: Reaching Out-of-School Children II*, op. cit.

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178 World Bank (2014) (Approved FY 2014). *Haiti: AF for Haiti Education for All Project Phase II* (P147608). Project Appraisal Document (PAD875). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/850401468040160834/pdf/PAD8750PJPR0P1010Box385226B00OUO090.pdf.

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180 World Bank (2014) (Approved FY 2014). *India: Third Elementary Education Project (SSA III)* (P144447). Project Appraisal Document (Report No: PAD743). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/583011468268510722/pdf/PAD7430P144447010Box385199B00OUO090.pdf.

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