

# The state of the privatisation of education in Francophone Africa

*Crossroads of perspectives*



# Introduction

Since the 1980s, countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including French-speaking African countries, have been obliged to implement structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), managed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to resolve budgetary crises<sup>1</sup>. The principal downside of these policies has been a drastic reduction in state funding allocated to essential public services such as education<sup>2</sup>. In the face of an exponential growth in demand for education, these decisions to reduce state funding for the education sector, along with other factors such as the introduction of flexible regulations favouring private actors, have contributed to an unprecedented growth in private actors in many countries around the world, notably those in francophone Africa.

For many years, this situation has been a major challenge. Indeed, as expressed by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in its Resolution on States' Obligation to Regulate Private Actors Involved in the Provision of Health and Education Services (ACHPR/Res. 420 (LXIV))<sup>3</sup> :

*"The growth of private actors' involvement in health and education services delivery often happens without the consideration of human rights resulting in growing discrimination in access to these services, a decrease in transparency and accountability, which negatively impact the enjoyment of the rights to health and education".*

However, the fact remains that the impact of the privatisation of education in the French-speaking African space is insufficiently documented. Against this background, and in order to increase the availability of data on the extent, impact and political responses to the growth of privatisation of education in French-speaking Africa, civil society organisations in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Madagascar have mobilised. These organisations carried out research, including the field data collection, between 2020 and 2022 in order to increase the availability of factual information on privatisation and its direct impact on the right to education in these four countries.



<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. 1995. *Effects of structural adjustment programmes on education and training*. Paris: UNESCO. [Link here](#) | Oringer, J. 1998. *Structural Adjustment Programs*. Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies. [Link here](#) | Rimmer, D. 1995. *Structural Adjustment in Africa*. Johannesburg: The South African Institute of International Affairs. [Link here](#)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. The international movement for universal education originates from the World Conference held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, which resulted in the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All, the aim of which is to guarantee universal access to basic education for all. This was reaffirmed for the 2000s in Dakar, during the World Education Forum, with the agreement of the six goals of Education for All. Subsequently, in 2000, Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals established the objective of achieving global primary education by 2015. Finally, in 2015, the Incheon Declaration reaffirmed states' commitments to Education for All and committed them to the Global Education 2030 Agenda. For more information, [please refer to this site](#)

<sup>3</sup> African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: 2019. *420 Resolution on States' Obligation to Regulate Private Actors Involved in the Provision of Health and Education Services*, 64th Ordinary Session held from 24 April to 14 May 2019. [Link here](#)



On the one hand, the reports from the civil society organisations in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire make a general analysis of the state of the privatisation of education in their respective countries. On the other, the reports from Madagascar and Mali focus on the situation of teachers in the context of increased privatisation.

### In Côte d'Ivoire:



The research carried out by the Mouvement Ivoirien des Droits Humains (MIDH) involved field data collection from a sample of 194 individuals and organisations in five localities: Abobo, Cocody, Yopougon, Bouaké and Daloa. The **report** produced from this research is entitled: The Impact of the Privatisation and Commercialisation of Education on the Right to Education in Côte d'Ivoire in light of the Abidjan Principles.

### In Senegal:



The study conducted by the Coalition des Organisations en SYnergie pour la Défense de l'Éducation Publique (COSYDEP) included a field data collection phase with around 340 individuals and organisations in five regions: Dakar and its suburbs, Diourbel, Kaolack, Thiès and Ziguinchor. The **report** produced as a result of this study is entitled: The Privatisation and Commercialisation of Education in Senegal.

### In Madagascar:



The research carried out by the Coalition Nationale Malgache pour l'Éducation pour Tous (CONAMEPT) included a data collection phase, mainly in the municipality of Ankadinandriana with 18 educators and 8 directors of private schools. The **report** issued from this research is entitled: The Privatisation of Education in Madagascar: Working Conditions of Teachers in Private Education in the Analamanga Regional Directorate of Education, Avaradrano School District, Ankadinandriana Pedagogical Planning Zone.

### In Mali:



The research carried out by Tribune Jeunes pour le Droit au Mali (TRJEUD) comprised one field data collection phase involving almost 150 persons (60 private school promoters and 90 teachers) in Commune III of the District of Bamako. The **report** produced, as a result of this research is entitled: Working conditions of primary school teachers in private schools in Mali: the case of Commune III in the district of Bamako, from 2016 to 2022.



The goal of this advocacy document is to present the main findings and recommendations of the aforementioned research reports to benefit, at national and international level, the fight against the commercialisation of education and to promote the right to education for all.

# Research findings

This section aims to combine the various problems identified by the research carried out in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and Mali.

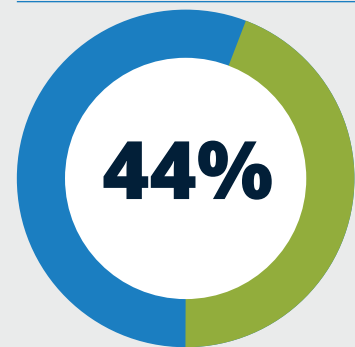


## Parents forced to choose private education due to a lack of public schools

In Côte d'Ivoire, the main factor governing the choice of parents of students attending private primary or secondary schools is, according to the survey, proximity to the family home - rather than quality, as was widely believed, which is a secondary consideration. This criterion was selected, at the primary and secondary levels, by 72% and 85% of parents respectively.

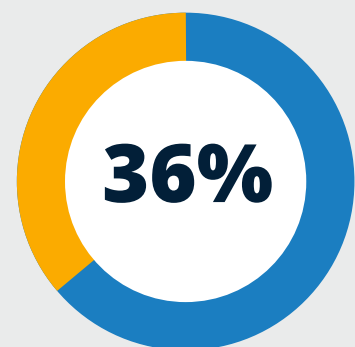
Among the pupils' parents surveyed, 44% with primary and 36% with secondary school children reported that there were no public schools near their homes. The limited availability of public schools is materialised by a lack of space. This is explained by the fact that, since 1992, Côte d'Ivoire has substantially reduced its spending on education, going from educational funding of over 5% of its GDP prior to 1992, with peaks above 8%, to a share of barely 4% today.

### Parents of primary school pupils interviewed

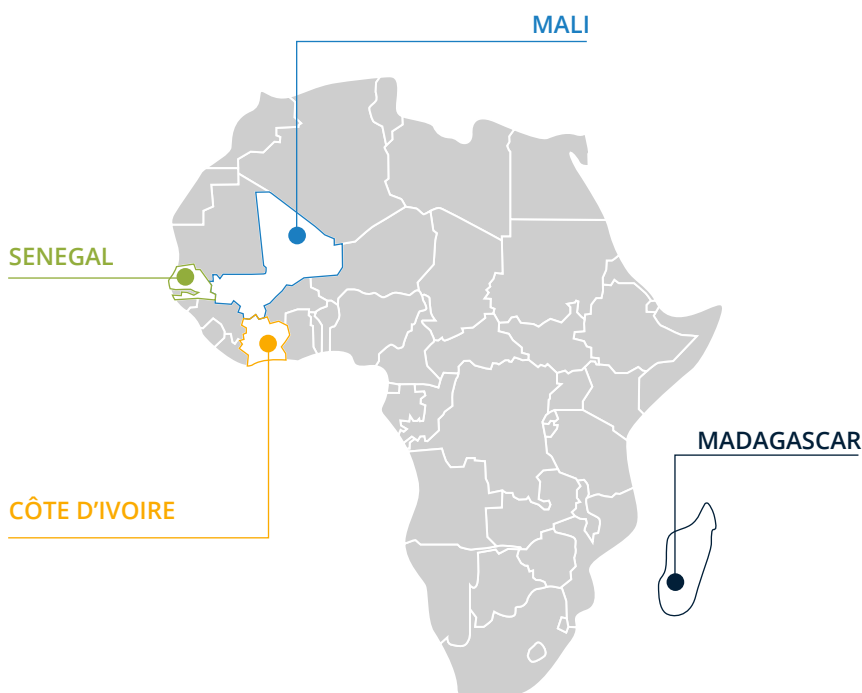


No public primary school near home

### Parents of secondary school pupils interviewed



No public secondary school near home



In Senegal, 74% of parents interviewed for the study stated that they send their children to public schools not by choice but by obligation, private schools being the only educational provision available to them. At the primary school level, the majority of schools are public, with the public sector recording an average annual growth rate (AAGR) of barely 1.7% between 2013 and 2018, whereas the private sector saw an AAGR of 6.4%. These proportions are in line with the secondary level's, with the public education recording an AAGR of 1.46% between 2013 and 2018 whereas private education recorded an AAGR of 2.30%.

## **B** Precarious working conditions for teachers in private schools

### • Underqualified private school teachers

In Madagascar, recruitment criteria do not make academic qualifications a requirement.

For primary education in Côte d'Ivoire, Article 28 of the 1992 Agreement between the State and non-religious private school promoters stipulates that teachers must, at a minimum, be holders of a baccalaureate. Teachers must hold a teaching licence issued by the competent Ministry. However, 53% of respondents are at the level of the brevet (BEPC)<sup>4</sup>, and therefore do not meet the legal requirements. Furthermore, 47% of the private primary school teachers surveyed stated that they did not have a teaching licence.

In Mali, several private schools suffer from a chronic shortage of qualified teachers due to the fairly low remuneration levels.

did not receive payment during the pandemic due to the closure of schools.

In Ankadinandriana municipality Madagascar, private school teachers are paid a monthly flat rate of between 50,000 and 100,000 ariary (between \$14.28 and \$28.57), which is well below the SMIG (minimum wage) of 168,000 ariary (about \$48 at the time of the research).

In Mali, although 93.87% of the teachers surveyed in Bamako District's Commune III have a salary in line with the minimum wage, it is clear that the sum of 40,000 CFA francs set as the minimum wage is in reality insufficient, especially since many promoters are happy to comply with the minimum wage without offering any additional benefits. According to the teachers, it is difficult to cover family expenses with 40,000 CFA francs.

### • Insufficient wages

In Côte d'Ivoire, the salaries offered in private schools are often below the legal minimum. Of the private primary school teachers surveyed, 86.7% claim that their remuneration does not comply with the Agreement in force between the State and non-religious private promoters. At the secondary school level, 85.7% of respondents have salaries below the threshold provided for by the Agreement. In addition, most of these teachers work illegally, without an employment contract. At the primary school level, 80% of teachers surveyed said that they were not paid during the COVID-19 crisis. The situation is similar in Mali, where short-term teachers



<sup>4</sup> Certificate awarded to Junior High School students who have passed the exam to move to Senior High School  
Photo credit: James Dalrymple / Shutterstock.com



## • Insufficient social protection and non-enjoyment of the right to unionise

In Mali, in Bamako District's Commune III, 72% of teachers in the schools surveyed are recruited on the basis of a non-written agreement, and only 28% have a contract in accordance with the provisions of the law. Few promoters protect their teachers through membership of institutions such as the INPS<sup>5</sup> or the CANAM<sup>6</sup>. Only 23.33% of teachers interviewed benefit from this, compared to 76.66% who do not.

In Senegal, 39% of the schools monitored are not up to date with their social security contributions.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the exercise of one's right to unionise is neither sufficiently complied with nor protected in private schools, specifically because teachers are afraid to join a union. At the primary school level, 73% of teachers surveyed did not belong to a union, whilst at the secondary school level, no teacher surveyed was a union member.

In Mali, the situation is similar in Bamako District's Commune III, where only 13.33% of the schools surveyed have unions, whereas 86.66% do not.



## High tuition fees create socio-economic inequalities and discrimination

In Côte d'Ivoire, there are various types of fees in private schools, including registration fees, tuition fees and ancillary fees, in a country where the average monthly salary in 2019 was 107,748 CFA francs (€164.26). The parents of 66% of primary and 42% of secondary pupils said that they had been late with their payments at least once. Of the parents who were in arrears, 68.2% and 71.4% in primary and secondary schools respectively confirmed that their child had been expelled from school.

In Senegal, field survey data show that the financial costs are routinely between 100,000 and 150,000 CFA francs per year. Thirty per cent of parents interviewed fall within this range. Seventeen per cent pay between 50,000 and 100,000 CFA francs. When compared to

household incomes in Senegal, where the gross income per capita is about 780,000 CFA francs per year, this represents a considerable burden. In addition to enrolment fees and monthly payments, parents are expected to pay miscellaneous charges that can exceed the budget of low-income households. The diversity of costs suggests that schools do not offer equal levels of service; they cater to different socio-economic groups. This situation promotes neither inclusion nor equity, but increases inequalities and leads to families being classified according to their socio-economic status.



## Insufficient regulation of private schools

In Commune III of Mali's Bamako District, only 30 to 40% of the private institutions visited complied with the specifications for obtaining authorisation to open private schools. Yet, schools that do not respect the specifications continue to operate; some are not concerned in the least.

In Senegal, insufficient regulation of private institutions has resulted in an inability to monitor these schools with any regularity. The national education inspectors interviewed during the study cited logistical limitations and the ratio of inspectors to teachers, which can be as high as 1:200 in some localities.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the survey found at least one unauthorised primary school in each of the research areas.

In Senegal, 5% of the schools in the field survey sample were unauthorised.



<sup>5</sup> National Institute of Social Security

<sup>6</sup> National Health Insurance Fund

# Research recommendations<sup>7</sup>



## Increase state funding for public education, in order to expand the provision of public education

In Côte d'Ivoire, increase state spending on education as a percentage of GDP from 5% to 8%.

In Senegal, devote the majority of public resources to upgrading the provision of public education.



## Strengthen the regulation of private schools

In Côte d'Ivoire, strengthen the inspection and monitoring mechanisms for private schools, specifically by increasing the human and financial resources allocated for this purpose; in the event of non-compliance with the minimum standards applicable to private educational institutions, enforce the sanctions provided for by law.

In Mali, close down any existing institutions that lack a valid authorisation.

In Senegal, strengthen the monitoring and compliance of the private education sector.



## Improve the working conditions of private school teachers

### • Qualified teachers

In Côte d'Ivoire, raise the minimum qualification for the recruitment of public and private primary school teachers to at least the baccalaureate level and ensure adequate teacher training.

In Senegal, respect the minimum qualifications of staff, working conditions, employment and remuneration, freedom of association, and collective bargaining.

neration, freedom of association, and collective bargaining.

In Madagascar, ensure in practice that recruitment criteria require the national school certificate of completion of the brevet.

In Mali, ensure that teachers recruited in the private sector are qualified teachers.

### • Salaries increased by the promoters of private schools

In Côte d'Ivoire, improve the salaries of private school teachers by adopting and monitoring the application of the 2015 salary scale for the non-religious private sector and awarding pay increases every two years, in line with those of the public and other private sectors.

In Mali, increasing teachers' salaries is essential for attracting qualified teachers.

### • Improved stability for teachers

In Mali, adopt a collective agreement for private sector teachers.

In addition, the State should ensure that promoters of private institutions:

- Comply with the terms of reference for the creation of private schools, especially with regard to teachers' employment conditions.
- Recruit teachers in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- Ensure that teachers have social security cover.

In Côte d'Ivoire, ensure the legality of all employed teachers' contracts, and in particular register them with the National Social Security Fund (CNPS) in order for teachers to be eligible for welfare benefits.

In Madagascar, make a summary document of rights and obligations available to teachers, and ensure that they are familiar with it.

<sup>7</sup> It should be borne in mind that the recommendations from Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire are of a general nature, whereas those from Mali and Madagascar focus on issues specific to teachers'.

# Conclusion



The research conducted in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Mali and Madagascar has provided an overview of the privatisation of education in each of these countries. While the reports from Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire made a general analysis, and those from Mali and Madagascar focused on the situation of teachers in a smaller geographical area, a detailed analysis of the reports reveals a significant number of common findings. From the lack of public education provision forcing parents to enrol their children in private institutions, to the precarious employment conditions for teachers in such private schools; from the tuition fees in the aforementioned institutions to the insufficient

regulation of private institutions: these studies contribute to filling the data gap on the privatisation and commercialisation of education in francophone Africa.

Such research, which increases the availability of data, provides a solid foundation for raising awareness about the effects of privatisation on education. This paper is intended to be used for advocacy purposes: not only to educate stakeholders about the issues surrounding privatisation in education, but also to demonstrate the need to strengthen the public education system in order to ensure the right to education for all.

This synthesis was produced by The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Coalition Éducation, with the support of Agence Française de Développement and Open Society Foundations. The members of the Francophone Network Against the Commercialisation of Education would like to thank the University of Geneva for the civil society training, within the framework of which the Madagascar and Mali research was carried out.



**The Francophone Network Against the Commercialisation of Education** is a coalition of 317 member organisations that have come together to alert, monitor, collectively mobilise and advocate the need to guarantee quality public education and to help bring an end to the commercialisation of education. This network is a product of the mobilisation around the Francophone Call Against the Commercialisation of Education. Grounded on the respect for the right to education and the inclusion of actors committed to the promotion and reinforcement of the role of public services, the Call by the Francophone Civil Society Against the Commercialisation of Education was signed by more than 400 organisations from 43 countries of the French-speaking space. It forms the current basis of the francophone mobilisation against the commercialisation of education.