



75 years of action

**National Commissions
tell their stories**



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The content of this publication has been reworked to adhere to a common format. In this regard, every effort has been made to retain most of the information provided. The Secretariat apologizes for any oversights or misunderstandings.

Cover photo: UNESCO Headquarters, 1965 © UNESCO / R.Lesage

UNESCO is the only UN Agency to have a global network of National Commissions!

The National Commissions for UNESCO have been part of UNESCO's history since its foundation. They represent nodal points of action, supporting the Organisation's mission and creating deep ties with the civil society and local institutions.

The publication looks back over more than 75 years, zooming in at times on activities and projects that defined an era. It also outlines for the first time how the National Commission's roles of liaison, coordination, consultation, and information, and especially of directed action led to lasting changes in the countries around the world.

For the first time, the story of the family of National Commissions for UNESCO is told from the point of view of lesser-known key actors. They are heroes of a different kind, their actions deserve a presentation, since their stories are also the story of UNESCO. This historical overview gives a front seat to all those who worked to shape ideas and transform them into actions.

The publication aims to be an opportunity for reflection but also inspiration for the future, as UNESCO's impact across the world is intrinsically connected to the National Commission's successful translation of the Organisation's mission into local projects, ideas, and actions.

Seventy-five years after UNESCO's birth, we are again called to act and think as "one world" and the network of National Commissions are an integral part of UNESCO's vision to realise this aim.

There are
199
National Commissions
for UNESCO
across the world!

75 years of action

**National Commissions
tell their stories**



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Foreword

by the Director-General of UNESCO

From its very inception 75 years ago, UNESCO put in place a network of National Commissions, unique to the United Nations system. The basic idea was very simple: to mobilise every nation's thinkers and civil society, in all their diversity, with a view to building and maintaining peace.

This network has grown continuously since that time, to the point that it has become a real family—one that works closely with UNESCO and enables us to amplify the impact of our actions.

For the organisation's 75th anniversary, which is also that of our National Commissions, this publication seeks to celebrate these unique partners and allies by recalling some of the actions that we have accomplished with their support. These operations—past or present, local, regional or global—have each, in their own way, extended the scope of UNESCO's activities in the fields covered by its mandate. This is visible in our work to make education equally accessible to all, to safeguard heritage and cultural diversity, and to defend freedom of expression and human rights.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which has disrupted and fractured the world for nearly two years, has done nothing to undermine the role of our National Commissions as intermediaries, as amplifiers; quite the contrary. Since the start of the crisis, this network has proven to be extraordinarily resourceful in reacting to the emergency, by joining UNESCO's major initiatives as well as by launching their own actions.

This unique role and expertise have given the National Commissions an unparalleled perspective. Hence our determination to ensure that they be heard and closely involved in the drafting of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy that will take us through to the dawn of the next decade, and that will be presented to the General Conference this November.

The following pages offer a succinct overview of the remarkable work we have carried out together to defend global common goods—education, science, culture and information. They tell a tale of all that we have done together, but also all that we have yet to do, as we work to defend a multilateralism that is both tangible and diverse.



Audrey Azoulay,
Director-General of UNESCO
© UNESCO / Christelle Alix

A handwritten signature of Audrey Azoulay in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Audrey Azoulay

Introduction

The network of National Commissions was born at the same time as UNESCO, becoming an integral part of its work, and fulfilling a mission that remains vital 75 years later. In the words of UNESCO Director-General, Ms Audrey Azoulay, the National Commissions ensure that the organisation has “the finger on the pulse of 199 countries, both member states and associate members”.¹ This is an enormous task, an effort that requires widespread mobilisation, focus, local, regional, and global coordination, and a keen understanding of contemporary challenges, as the “constitutionally recognised focal points of UNESCO’s activities in member states”.²

The work of the National Commissions and their impact goes well beyond the terms defined in Article VII of the Constitution. The adoption of the Charter of National Commissions for UNESCO by the General Conference at its 20th session in 1978 was an important milestone that broadened National Commissions’ involvement in the preparation and evaluation of UNESCO’s programmes. The charter underlines how every National Commission contributes individually to the transformational work of UNESCO, not just in their country but on a global scale. This publication documents these wide-ranging impacts.

Their exemplary mobilisation in the face of the pandemic is further proof of how much their multifaceted roles, of liaison and coordination, consultation, and information, and especially of directed action, helped to change the world. The National Commissions’ deep ties with civil society and institutions, in addition to their partnerships with the private sector and other important social actors in the community, served as UNESCO’s avenues for action in all regions of the globe.

This publication illustrates the National Commissions’ steadfast contributions to the fulfilment of UNESCO’s mission and ideals. The stories presented here are as varied as the countries of the National Commissions, but they all contribute to a “truer and more perfect knowledge of each other’s lives”.³

¹ Video address by the Director-General of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay, on the occasion of the 7th Interregional Meeting of National Commissions, February 22, 2021

² 1997 29 C/Resolution 61 Interregional co-operation among National Commissions

³ UNESCO Constitution, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

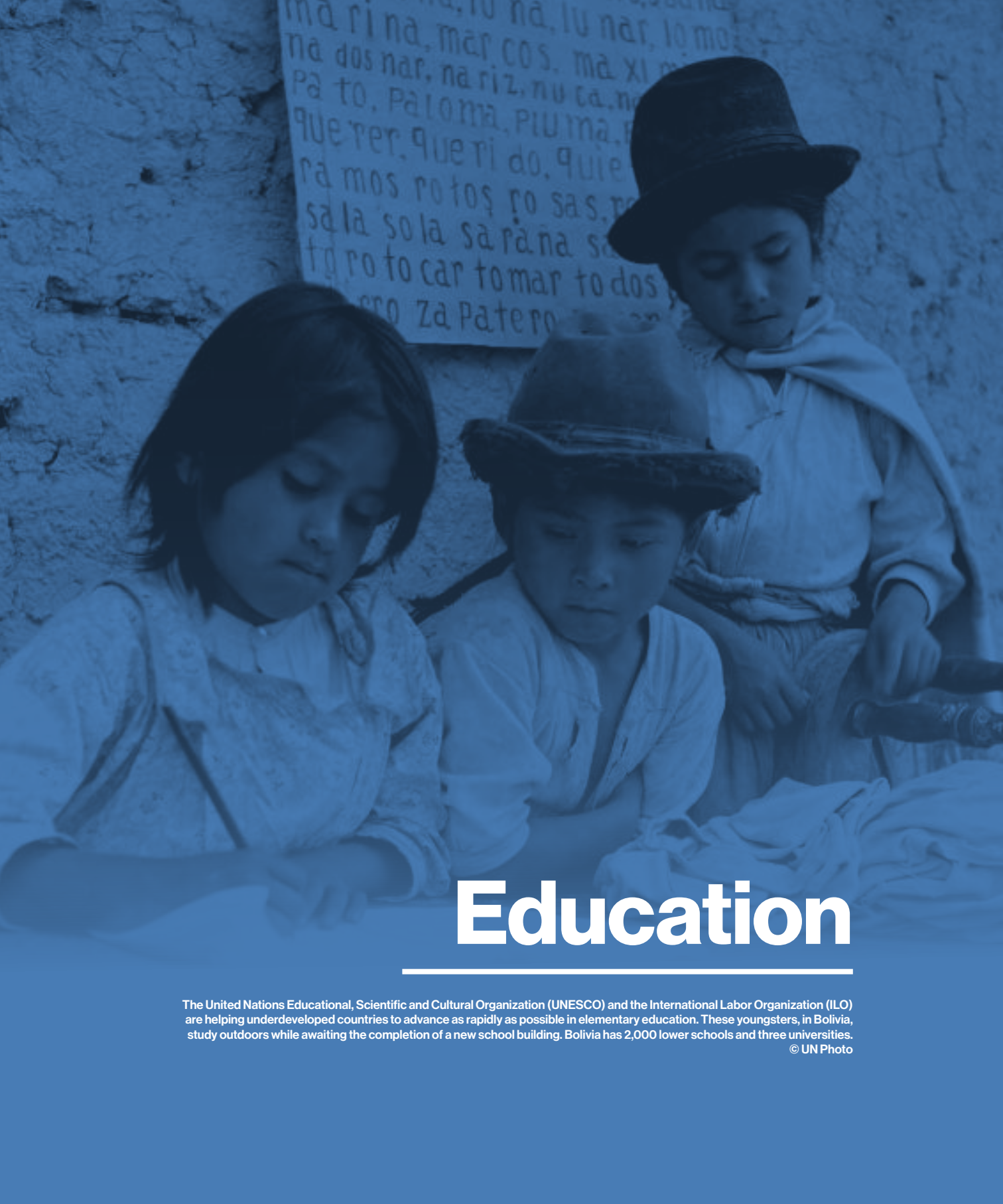
The publication looks back over more than 75 years, zooming in at times on activities and projects that defined an era and gave substance to abstract concepts, such as “heritage” or “media”. Beyond key meetings and important documents, which outlined new reflections on the future, one can also read about the strong bonds linking people and their communities, their trust in UNESCO’s values and their hope for a better tomorrow. This publication gives a front seat to all those who worked to shape ideas and transform them into actions. They are heroes of a different kind, their actions deserve a presentation, and their stories are also the story of UNESCO.

The book is structured according to UNESCO’s fields of competence (Education, Culture, Communication and Information, Social and Human Sciences and Natural Sciences), with special attention given to Priority Gender Equality and Priority Africa. It aims to offer a broad picture of the family of National Commissions. This is, of course, not exhaustive but illustrative. The actions, programmes and initiatives outlined in the different chapters underline the network’s uniqueness in the UN system, and its immense outreach and impact.

While celebrating the National Commissions’ remarkable history, this publication underscores their indispensable role for the future. As powerful contributors to UNESCO’s mission, the National Commissions are redefining the organisation’s impact for years to come. Seventy-five years after UNESCO’s birth, we are again called to act and think as “one world”, and the National Commissions are an integral part of UNESCO’s vision to realise this aim.



Mr Firmin Édouard Matoko,
Assistant Director-General for Priority Africa and External relations



Education

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) are helping underdeveloped countries to advance as rapidly as possible in elementary education. These youngsters, in Bolivia, study outdoors while awaiting the completion of a new school building. Bolivia has 2,000 lower schools and three universities.

© UN Photo

When discussing learning and education, Aristotle said: “Education must be one and the same for everyone.”⁴ The aspiration of building the defences of peace in the minds of men and women starts with education. UNESCO’s constitution firmly stresses the need to dispel the “ignorance of each other’s ways” to avoid future wars.⁵ In a demonstration of its commitment, UNESCO’s first publication was entitled “Fundamental Education: Common Ground for All Peoples,”⁶ initially issued as a report for the first session of the General Conference in November 1946.

“The future of the humanity depends on quality of teachers and education.”

*Ms Stefania Giannini,
Assistant Director-General for Education*

UNESCO’s mandate in education drives its mission to build peace, eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development. UNESCO views education as a fundamental human right for all, throughout life, and as a force for transformation. It is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to cover all facets and levels of education, from early childhood to tertiary, from literacy to technical and vocational skills.

In this context, UNESCO has been entrusted to lead the coordination and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 4, by which countries commit to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education by 2030, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The organisation has spearheaded programmes on education for sustainable development and global citizenship to help countries gear learning to the global challenges of our times, with gender equality as an underlying principle.

UNESCO’s interventions across the world encompass educational development, capacity-building and normative advances from pre-school to higher education and beyond, supporting governments, teachers, educators and students. In the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, the largest worldwide disruption to education since the organisation’s founding, UNESCO provided a platform for peer learning and action to build resilience and strengthen distance and hybrid solutions. Some of UNESCO’s most successful and unique projects are international collaborative efforts which bring together learners from across the globe to share its mandate for peace through education. The Associated Schools Network, the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs programme and the UNEVOC network for institutions specialised in technical and vocational education and training are prime examples of this. As the educator Maria Montessori put it: “Preventing war is the work of politicians, establishing peace is the work of educationists.”

⁴ Aristotle, Politics, Book 8, 1337a. Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vol. 21, translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1944.

⁵ UNESCO Constitution, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁶ Fundamental Education: Common Ground for All Peoples, Paris 1946, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED105181.pdf>

Education at the Heart of National Commissions' Work

From the outset, education has been at the heart of UNESCO's mission. The projects and programmes led by the National Commissions have a direct link to UNESCO's mission and priorities. They showcase both the diversity of its member states and the dedication of those involved in translating UNESCO's global ideals into palpable actions around the world. The National Commissions' work broadens the range of influence of the organisation's mandate through programmes adapted to their specific regions, creating events that respond to local conditions by promoting UNESCO's global aspiration for peace.

UNESCO's activities in education take different shapes, as distinct as the regions of the world in which they are developed. These initiatives become key platforms for local and national governance policies in education as well as regional coordination. An important example is the **Pacific Heads of Education System (PHES)** which has taken place regularly since 1977. This major education platform has evolved to become a network of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Pacific. PHES today is composed of the 15 SIDS from among the UNESCO member states in the Pacific. These are Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Tokelau (Associate Member), and Vanuatu. The member states take turns to chair the PHES and co-host the meeting with the funds from the Participation Programme, and the facilitation of UNESCO Office for the Pacific States. PHES's main aim is to support coordination among the national education systems by identifying common solutions, facilitating SIDS-SIDS or South-South and triangular cooperation, supporting one-another's professional development, and promoting standards for education and education outcomes. Today, the continued cooperation among the National Commissions for UNESCO of the Pacific Member States, and Associated



Pacific SIDS representatives. © UNESCO Apia Office



Pacific consultative meeting on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, with participation of the former chair of the Samoa National Commission and current Prime Minister of Samoa, Ms Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa (middle left). © UNESCO Apia Office

Members and their mutual support, are key to ensuring the continued advancement of education systems in the Pacific region.

The E-9 Partnership between **Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan**, which represents over half of the world's population and some of the largest education systems in the world, is another example of this kind of coordinated action. First established in 1993, the partnership aims to strengthen political will and collective effort to ensure quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.⁷ In this context, the **Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO** hosted a E-9 Ministerial Meeting on Education 2030 in Dhaka, in February 2017, since

⁷ <https://en.unesco.org/education2030-sdg4/coordination/e9-partnership>



H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Education Ministers of E-9 Member States at the E-9 Meeting, Bangladesh, 2017.
© Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO



Literacy lesson during the Great National Literacy Crusade.
© Nicaraguan National Commission for UNESCO

Bangladesh was the Chair of the Partnership. The debates focused on the effects of the pandemic on education as well as the need to accelerate Digital Learning in the partnership countries. These events are an important step towards concrete policies and initiatives that will determine the achievement of educational sustainable development goals (SDG4) in these countries.

UNESCO's work is heavily supported by partnerships between countries and joining their efforts for a common goal. One of the key aspects concerns the recognition of studies, certifications, and degrees inside and across countries. For instance, the **Mauritius**

National Commission for UNESCO offered its support for the ratification of the Addis Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States, which was adopted in 2014 and came into force in 2019.⁸ This is a crucial step towards increased student mobility and knowledge exchange on the African continent.

UNESCO's action in education began with literacy, in 1946, and this has remained a priority of its education mission.⁹ In the following decades, the United Nations and UNESCO reiterated support for literacy in the 1975 Persepolis Declaration, which stated: "Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental human right."¹⁰ The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (EFA, Jomtien, Thailand) underlined that: "Literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving are essential learning tools that comprise the basic learning needs of every person... child, youth and adult."¹¹ Later, the 1997 Hamburg Declaration held under Resolution 11 stated that: "Literacy, broadly conceived as the basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing world, is a fundamental human right."¹²

UNESCO has affirmed and reaffirmed its leadership role in the "battle for literacy" from the outset. In this context, **the Nicaraguan National Commission for UNESCO** supported UNESCO's mission in education to improve literacy levels. One of its first initiatives was the "Great National Literacy Crusade" in the 1980s and later, the 2007 "Yo, si Puedo" programme. In recognition

8 <https://en.unesco.org/news/unescos-addis-convention-higher-education-enter-force> Text of the Convention: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49282&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html#STATE_PARTIES

9 Wagner, D. A. (2011). What happened to literacy? Historical and conceptual perspectives on literacy in UNESCO. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31, 319–323.

10 Declaration of Persepolis, 1975. <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/persepolis-declaration-literacy-1975-en.pdf>

11 World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127583>

12 Adult education: the Hamburg Declaration; the Agenda for the Future, <https://uii.unesco.org/adult-education/confintea/adult-education-hamburg-declaration-agenda-future>

of this valuable work, the programme was inscribed in the Memory of the World Register.¹³

The impact of education and literacy often takes at least a generation to bear fruit. Some projects, although started decades before, continue to affect current programmes because previous policies and ideas have only now come to fruition. One such example is the 1990 initiative in Doha, when the **Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** and UNESCO co-organised an expert meeting on the Regional Program for Universal Primary Education, its Renewal and Literacy in the Arab Countries by 2000. Gathering representatives from Arab offices, the Arab Literacy and Adult Education Organisation, the Arab Council for Childhood and Development and from the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States, the event set the stage for creating a series of action plans and in-depth recommendations for curriculum development, teacher training and educational research, funding, and the use of communication for education.

The Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science also supported UNESCO's call for the international campaign on "The Right to Education". The commission worked with relevant ministries and institutions in the country to launch a national campaign, targeting school and university students, their parents, and teachers. The campaign, which also included a civil society component, proved to be very successful in raising awareness of the importance of the collective social action for greater support for education.

The **Ghana National Commission for UNESCO** fought against a different type of illiteracy: digital. The commission used the tried and tested method of mobile traveling vans. In August 2007 the National Commission procured ten mobile library vans, stocked with books and computers and offered them to the Ghana Library Board to promote reading in rural communities without libraries. The project aimed to help with education reforms, and



Public library established by UNESCO and the Columbian Government. November 1955. © UNESCO Archives

to reach disadvantaged rural communities. These mobile services became regional library vans that continue to provide thousands of rural Ghanaian school children with library services.

This project traces its roots back to 1953 when UNESCO created the first initiatives to fight illiteracy by providing schools and universities with mobile libraries to ensure access to knowledge and education. Schools in the Republic of Colombia benefitted from UNESCO's idea, as well as regions of Republic of India. This has been one of the most successful projects for UNESCO and its member states.¹⁴

During his tenure as UNESCO Director-General (1962-1974) René Maheu considered literacy to be a fundamental duty for UNESCO: "I consider the struggle against illiteracy to be the most imperative and the most inspiring task of our present generation."¹⁵ Ghana's National Commission for UNESCO continued to support education with the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) for teaching and learning in Ghana to 38 teacher training colleges (now Colleges of Education). Special schools in Ghana

¹³ National Literacy Crusade, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/national-literacy-crusade>

¹⁴ "The Bookmobile comes to town," UNESCO Courier, June 1953, 12. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000070259.locale=fr>

¹⁵ René Maheu, "The struggle against illiteracy – the most exalting venture of our generation," UNESCO Courier, October 1964, 5.



Mobile library. © Ghana National Commission for UNESCO

were also provided with computers, braille software and printers with the aim of promoting inclusive education.

The introduction of ICTs in education often needs special planning at a high level, as a national strategy. The **Maldives National Commission for UNESCO** supported a national workshop for developing ICTs in the Education Master Plan, which was held in Male in September 2019. The Master Plan was a blueprint created to guide the setting of priorities and focusing of resources. It also helped the alignment of stakeholders, tracking performance, achievements and managing change for information technology education. This workshop was a joint effort between UNESCO and the National Institute of Education (NIE) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to collectively develop a shared understanding of the second ICT in Education Master Plan.

The celebration of the UNESCO World Book Capitals also highlights the importance of literacy.¹⁶ In 2012 the city of Yerevan was declared World Book Capital, with events that also celebrated the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing. The anniversary brought to the fore new ideas in the fields of publishing and translation. The World Book Capital events create opportunities for countries with a tradition in printing to share their experience and achievements, uniting around books and knowledge, discovering new scientific and creative potential, and discussing challenges in publishing. Yerevan organised a number of events throughout the year, including *ArmBookExpo*, *Eternity of Writing* and *Hero-books sculptures* by French-based Armenian sculptor David Minasyan. The **Armenian National Commission for UNESCO** supported the organisation by piloting numerous programmes dedicated to copyright, translation, freedom of speech, and modern literature issues. Yerevan

16 UNESCO Book Capital, <https://en.unesco.org/world-book-capital-city>

also welcomed the opening of new bookstores and the inauguration of new magazines.

The designation of Tbilisi as World Book Capital 2021¹⁷ put the Georgian capital in the spotlight with the **Georgian National Commission for UNESCO** preparing 12 months of intense activities dedicated to reading, book accessibility for ethnic minorities and people with special needs. The projects and initiatives carried out throughout the year were designed to encourage publishing activities at local and global levels, as well as to promote literacy among young people. Some of these activities took the form of creating libraries, support for writers and making books accessible for all readers in Georgia, regardless of their financial and physical capabilities. The nomination of Tbilisi as World Book Capital 2021 launched a debate over the use of modern technologies to improve reading levels among youth. The opening event was held amid the constraints of the global pandemic, but it nevertheless set the stage for full involvement from UNESCO, the Georgian National Commission for UNESCO, as well as representatives of Tbilisi and other cities.

These celebratory publishing events remind us that the need for adult education and literacy projects remains high. The **Saudi National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** supported the establishment of World Arabic Language Day. The Arabic language is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, used daily by more than 400 million people. World Arabic Language Day has been celebrated since 2012, every year on 18 December.¹⁸ The date coincides with the day in 1973 that the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Arabic as the sixth official language of the organisation. Arabic has played a catalytic role in knowledge, promoting the dissemination of Greek and Roman sciences and philosophies to Renaissance Europe. The 2021 World Arabic Language Day theme, “Arabic Language, a



Yerevan-World Book Capital stamp (2012).
© Armenian National Commission for UNESCO



Promoting reading among the Youth.
© Georgian National Commission for UNESCO

¹⁷ UNESCO World Book Capital, <https://en.unesco.org/world-book-capital-city>

¹⁸ World Arabic Language Day, <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldarabiclanguageaday>



Award ceremony presented by the Rector of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) Mr George Sharvashidze. Professor at the Free University of Berlin is awarded the title of the Honorary Doctor of the TSU in the frames of the 100th Anniversary of the TSU held in association with UNESCO.
© Georgian National Commission for UNESCO

bridge between civilisations,” is a call to reaffirm the Arabic language’s important role in connecting people through culture, science, literature and more.

For World Poetry Day on March 21, 2021, the **National Commission for UNESCO of the Republic of North Macedonia** and UNESCO paid a multilingual tribute to the poet and linguist Blaže Koneski. His centenary was inscribed on the calendar of anniversaries celebrated in association with UNESCO during 2021. One of World Poetry Day’s main objectives is to support linguistic diversity through poetic expression. The event also offers endangered languages the opportunity to be heard within their communities. The celebration saw the awarding of the Golden Wreath Award of the “Struga Poetry Evenings” for 2021 and the Bridges of Struga Prize for a young poet, awarded in partnership with UNESCO. These events both promote literacy as well as the preservation of linguistic heritage. UNESCO’s work in protecting and promoting endangered languages, as well as raising awareness about their intrinsic value, is seen in greater depth in projects such as the Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger.¹⁹

¹⁹ <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap/language-iso-kca.html>

National Commissions are also important in hosting milestone international conferences and founding institutes focused on education. Thus, the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Education (UIL) in Hamburg, established originally in the 1950s as the UNESCO Institute for Education, is one of three institutes in Germany (the other two short-lived) to support reconstruction after World War II. The **German Commission for UNESCO** co-hosted international seminars on “Education for International Understanding” in the early years with these institutes.²⁰ In 1962, it co-hosted the first European “Conference on Adult Education” in Germany,²¹ which was instrumental in allowing UIL to focus on adult education, literacy, and lifelong learning after 1965.

Another key UNESCO conference in Germany was the first World Congress on Technical and Vocational Training (TVET), hosted in East Berlin in 1987.²² It indirectly led to the later establishment, in 2000, of a key unit of UNESCO on TVET (UNEVOC) in Bonn.

The first World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was co-hosted by UNESCO, the German government, and the German Commission for UNESCO in Bonn in 2009, a major event for ESD. UNESCO, the German government, and the commission collaborated once again to organise the third global ESD conference in May 2021.²³

²⁰ In 1949, reflecting on the end of the Second World War, UNESCO Member States met in Elsinore, Denmark, to discuss how adult learning and education could help promote world peace and international understanding. That became the first of six International Conferences on Adult Education, known as ‘CONFINTEA’ (their French acronym: CONFérence INTernationale sur l’Education des Adultes). <https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/confintea>

²¹ European Regional Conference on Adult Education - Agreement with Federal Republic of Germany, 1962. <https://atom.archives.unesco.org/project-1-2712-11-code-514-european-regional-conference-on-adult-education-agreement-with-federal-republic-of-germany>

²² Norbert Wollschläger and Éric Fries Guggenheim, “A history of vocational education and training in Europe - from divergence to convergence,” Vocational Training 32, European Journal, Belgium, 2004. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/32-en.pdf>

²³ UNESCO 2021 World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, <https://en.unesco.org/events/ESDfor2030>

The work of the **French National Commission for UNESCO** in education has come to fruition by focusing on training and human resource development. Since the 1960s, at UNESCO's request, the commission has organised training sessions for managers and teachers from developing countries and across the then Eastern bloc. In subsequent years, the French National Commission has participated in large-scale and long-term operations (over 10 to 15 years), that contribute to the training of managers for a wide range of institutions such as teacher training colleges, engineering schools and universities, which are essential for the economic and social development of these countries. It is in the continuity of these actions that, under the commission's responsibility, 40 UNESCO Chairs have been created in France, participating in the development of these networks of competence.

One of the most important institutes for education is the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), a Category 1 institute, created in 1963 in Paris, on UNESCO's initiative. From the outset, it was conceived as an autonomous, learning, multidisciplinary organisation, capable of building bridges between international actors, and offering expertise on strategic issues related to education systems from all over the world.²⁴ In 2015, IIEP-UNESCO requested the French National Commission's participation in one of its annual training programmes held in France. The training was based on a case study which enabled the establishment of relations between French educational leaders and their colleagues around the world.

The establishment of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), a Category I UNESCO in New Delhi in 2012, highlighted the key role played by India as one of UNESCO's founding members. With the support of the **Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO**, UNESCO MGIEP focuses on



Building of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg.
© UIL



IIEP Class of 2015-2016 on a study visit to the academy.
© French National Commission for UNESCO



UNESCO Director-General, Ms Azoulay and Education Minister Shri Pokhriyal Nishank at MGIEP in New Delhi. © Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO

²⁴ IIEP-UNESCO: History of a pioneering institution. <http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/institute/iiep-unesco-history-pioneering-institution>



Cutting the tenth Anniversary Cake, 1981. Ms Hazel Bennett, Head of Department, cuts the tenth anniversary cake with students and Mr Vincente Garibaldi, representing UNESCO and the Department's guests for the occasion.
© Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO



The DLIS Computer Laboratory.
© Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO

achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.7. This goal focuses on education for building peaceful and sustainable societies across the world by developing programmes that promote social and emotional learning, innovate digital pedagogies and empower youth.²⁵ In 2019, on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, the World Youth Conference on Kindness took place. This aimed to provide young people with a global platform where they could actively engage with decision-makers to find new innovative ways of propagating non-violence to resolve conflicts.²⁶

The **National Commission for UNESCO of the Democratic Republic of the Congo** supported the transformation of the former Institute of Pedagogy into “Université Pédagogique Nationale” (UPN). The institute was founded in 1961, in the wake of independence. By training local teachers, the Democratic Republic of Congo aimed to re-imagine education from an African perspective. In 2005, the newly renamed university began training teachers in Didactics of the Disciplines or in Applied Pedagogy, a key feature of successful education systems.

The **Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO** in its turn played an important role in the creation of the Caribbean School of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) at the University of the West Indies, as well as of the Department of Library and Information Service (DLIS). DLIS has been involved in the training of library professionals since 1971 and has taught students from virtually every English-speaking country in the Caribbean.

Japan has been a very active member in the field of education through projects within Education for All (EFA) and the UNESCO Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT). Since 2002, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO promotes ESD, which aims to support builders of a sustainable society by thinking globally and acting locally. This initiative was given momentum through the launch of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD: 2005-2014), when UNESCO was assigned as lead agency. In 2014, UNESCO and the **Japanese National Commission for UNESCO** organised the World Conference on ESD, which also inaugurated the “UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD”.²⁷ In recent years, Japan has led the launch of the

²⁵ UNESCO MGIEP <https://mgiep.unesco.org>

²⁶ World Youth Conference on Kindness, <https://mgiep.unesco.org/wyc2019>

²⁷ UNESCO-Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development, <https://en.unesco.org/prize-esd>

“Education for Sustainable Development” initiative to achieve SDGs. Under the framework of ESD for 2030, Japan strongly supported other member states to develop the Country Initiative through JFIT, and to mainstream ESD in their national educational policies.

In a similar vein, the **Kenya National Commission for UNESCO** has been instrumental in supporting and coordinating key reports in the field of education, such as the End of Decade Assessment (EDA) Report in 2010 and the final report on Education for All (EFA) in 2015. The commission is also spearheading the tracking and reporting of SDG4 goals and the Continental Strategy for Education in Africa (CESA) 2016-25 in collaboration with the Kenya Ministry of Education.²⁸ In 2018, the commission, together with UNESCO and the Ministry of Education, organised the Pan African Conference on Education (PACE) in Nairobi.²⁹ The meeting brought together more than 40 education ministers from the continent, and other key players in education. These gatherings set the stage for coordinated action in the region, supporting not just policy development, but also their grassroot implementations. The Kenya National Commission for UNESCO also advocated for the development of guidelines for mainstreaming ESD and GCED into Universities and TVET institutions in 2018-2021, as well as integrating GCED, ESD, peace education and education in emergencies into the Basic Education Curriculum in Kenya.³⁰



Dr Mulambe, Representative of Principal Secretary State Department of University Education and Research cuts the ribbon tying the copies of the guidelines for mainstreaming ESD and GCED in Universities and TVET institutions in 2018-21. Looking on is Dr Njoka, Secretary-General of Kenya National Commission for UNESCO and Prof. Penina, Chair of Drafting Committee.

© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO



Secretary General, Ms Marcellia Henry and Prime Minister Ms Silveria Jacobs. © Department of Communication of the Government of Sint Maarten

²⁸ Harmonising the approach for the joint reporting of national achievements on SDG4 and the Continental Strategy for Education in Africa (CESA) 2019, <https://en.unesco.org/news/harmonizing-approach-joint-reporting-national-achievements-sdg4-and-continental-strategy> and “Bridging CESA and SDG 4 in Africa,” http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/bridging_cesa_and_sdg4_in_africa-final.pdf

²⁹ Pan African Conference on Education (PACE) in Nairobi, Conference Report: <https://www.gcetclearinghouse.org/resources/pan-african-high-level-conference-education-pace-2018-conference-report>

³⁰ A guide to mainstreaming education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED) in universities in Kenya, <https://unesco.go.ke/2021/07/06/a-guide-to-mainstreaming-education-for-sustainable-development-esd-and-global-citizenship-education-gced-in-universities-in-kenya/>



Ms Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General, Mr Mintimer Shaimiev, State Counsellor of the Republic of Tatarstan, Mr Grigory Ordzhonikidze, Secretary-General of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO and members of the Commission.

© Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO

The **Sint Maarten National Commission for UNESCO** was recognised for its collaboration with the Department of Interior and Kingdom Relations, and the University of St. Martin to host series of seminars to raise public awareness about the importance of SDGs. The seminars reached more than 200 educators of elementary, secondary, TVET, and tertiary schools. The commission also supported the organisation of SDG high-school creative expression projects, which aimed to educate and build awareness among students. The activities used many different art forms such as poetry, dance, songs and film to promote SDG awareness.

Launched in 1992, the University Twinning and Networking Programme or UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, which involves more than 850 institutions in 117 countries, began to promote international inter-university cooperation and networking for knowledge-sharing and collaborative work. The programme supports the establishment of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks in key priority areas related to UNESCO's fields of competence. For instance, in 1998, the **Spanish National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO** organised the UNITWIN Programme's first European conference, which took place at the

National University of Distance Education in Madrid. Topics covered by the event, such as key issues related to education for women and minorities, are still relevant today.

In 2017, during the 39th session of the General Conference, the **Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO**, in close cooperation with the UNESCO, organised the celebration of the 25th year anniversary of the UNESCO Chairs Programme.³¹ The event significantly contributed to the strengthening of the programme's visibility and gave a new impetus to its further development.

Education plays a key role for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The **Saint Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO** supported the strengthening of the country's education policy through a review of their national strategies in 2016, and the implementation of the Education Sector Strategy Plan (2017-2021).

The **Eswatini National Commission for UNESCO** also focused on the development of the Education Sector policy. Initial studies for the development of a policy for education and training were made in 2006 and 2008 and benefitted from UNESCO's technical expertise. The results were used to formulate the first-ever national policy on education, which was approved by the Parliament in 2010 and came into full effect in 2011. The impact of a coherent education policy is tangible: from increasing school access to supporting vulnerable children by providing a safe and stable educational environment.

Education policies often focus on TVET, one of the key areas of UNESCO's work. TVET targets practical social challenges, affecting youth in particular: employment and entrepreneurship, the transition between education and the world of work, equal access to learning opportunities and skills development, gender equality

³¹ 25th Anniversary of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, <https://en.unesco.org/unitwin-unesco-chairs-programme/25th-anniversary>

and sustainability.³² To promote TVET, the **Bahrain National Commission for UNESCO** facilitated the creation of the Centre of Excellence for Technical and Vocational Education Sheikh Khalifa Bin Salman Institute of Technology, inaugurated in 2005.

For the **Botswana National Commission for UNESCO**, the Better Education for Africa's Rise (BEAR) project, co-funded by the Republic of Korea and UNESCO, represented a turning point for the country's TVET development. Conducted between 2011 and 2016, this initiative supported TVET systems in five Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Botswana, DR Congo, Malawi, Namibia, and Zambia. The focus was on providing training that could lead to an immediate increase in employability for learners, but also on improving access to this training, especially for women and disadvantaged groups. Over the past five years, this initiative centred on three core areas in the five countries—teacher training, labour market analysis, curriculum development and developing management information systems.

The BEAR project's partners are working closely with local industry and enterprises so that graduates acquire the right skills, attitude, and mindset.³³ The initiative's success is shown both by graduates' testimonials, who saw their employment perspectives shift once they joined the programme, but also teachers who can now better support their students. For Ms Tjedu Radinaane, a teacher in hospitality management at Gaborone Technical College, an institution developed through the BEAR project, one welcome innovation was the introduction of a much more transparent system of grading. Previous technical education programmes did not have a clearly defined grading system that was accepted by industry players. Radinaane said: "Now with the BEAR programme, I am very happy because



Mpho Motlalelgoosi from Gaborone Technical College presenting at the BEAR Developing a Curriculum Workshop (DACUM), Botswana.
© Botswana National Commission for UNESCO

we had input from all the stakeholders including industry practitioners." The involvement of industry representatives in shaping the courses meant that they were far more willing to accept students for work placements, she noted. In terms of her own professional development, Radinaane also saw a difference since taking BEAR training. She pointed to her work in developing a brand-new curriculum for the culinary arts programme as one of the highlights of her experience with BEAR in Botswana. The BEAR project has now entered its second phase (BEAR II 2017–2021), supporting five Eastern African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda, as well as improving the relevance, quality, and perception of their TVET systems.

The **Jordan National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** supported the Entrepreneurship Education Project in the Arab States. Entrepreneurship Education (EPE) in the Arab States is a joint project between UNESCO and StratREAL Foundation, UK, launched in 2008. The initiative supports the integration of entrepreneurship education into the educational systems, policies, programmes and practices

³² What UNESCO does on TVET, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/skills-work-and-life/action-and-strategy-for-technical-and-vocational-education-and-training-tvet> (2016–2021), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245239>

³³ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000228753>



High-level Panel on Countering Violent Extremism through Girls' Education, Baku, 5-6 May 2017. © National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO

for formal education in the targeted countries.³⁴ The first phase focused on the collection and dissemination of successful experiences of EPE (2009-2010) while the second focused on providing technical support for the development of strategic plans to facilitate the incorporation of the concept of EPE in education systems (2011-2012). The UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for TVET in Bonn, Germany has taken the lead in implementing this project, in co-operation with UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States based in Beirut, Lebanon. As a result of Component I, four case studies on entrepreneurship education in Egypt, Jordan, Oman and Tunisia, as well as a regional synthesis report, were published in Arabic and English. EPE has contributed to promoting life-long skills for individuals, expanding their experiences, developing their readiness for work, as well as enhancing creativity, innovation and productivity. Overall, the programme is designed to support the trend towards self-employment for youth.

Many of UNESCO's initiatives targeting youth aim to create a sense of global citizenship and belonging. In

2015, an Executive Board decision³⁵ strengthened the work of UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education (GCED) by focusing on its part in UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism. This initiative is rooted in the organisation's Constitution, the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace³⁶ as well as the more recent frameworks of Education 2030 Agenda³⁷ and the Sustainable Development Agenda, specifically Target 4.7.³⁸ Preventing violent extremism through education (PVE-E)³⁹ is a multifaceted initiative. It aims to have both a structural effect, by strengthening the national education systems to respond to the challenges raised by violent extremism. At the same time, it seeks to have a direct impact on learners of all ages, by equipping them with knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviours, enabling them to take action against the proliferation of violent extremism.

In this context, the **National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO** organised in May 2017 a high-level panel entitled: "Countering Violent Extremism through Girls' Education" as part of the 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku.⁴⁰ The meeting, which gathered a number of high-level guests, raised key topics such as gender discrimination and the threat of violence

³⁴ https://unevoc.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/docs/EPE_Regional_Synthesis_Report_Component_II_EN_.pdf

³⁵ Executive Board Decision 197 EX/Decision 46, 2015. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235180>

³⁶ Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, November 19, 1974. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13088&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

³⁷ Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning, UNESCO, 2016. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656>

³⁸ UNESCO and Sustainable Development Goals, September 2015. <https://en.unesco.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals> "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."

³⁹ <https://en.unesco.org/preventingviolentextremismthrougheducation>

⁴⁰ 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, <https://en.unesco.org/events/4th-world-forum-intercultural-dialogue>

against women and girls, as well as the importance of girls' education in countering violent extremism. The meeting ended with the adoption of the Global Humanitarian Call on girls' education.

In the same year, the **Canadian Commission for UNESCO** and UNESCO organised a major event focused on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)⁴¹ and GCED.⁴² GCED is a strategic area of UNESCO's Education Sector programme and builds on the work of Peace and Human Rights Education. It aims to instill in learners the values, attitudes and behaviors that support responsible global citizenship: creativity, innovation, and commitment to peace, human rights, and sustainable development. At the same time, ESD empowers learners of all ages to address the interconnected global challenges we now face. These include climate change, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, poverty and inequality. Under the banner of *UNESCO Week for Peace: The Role of Education*⁴³, this event was held in March 2017 in Ottawa, gathering more than 500 educational experts and practitioners from more than 90 countries. International delegates and youth leaders exchanged promising practices and tools, examined emerging pedagogical trends and innovations, and discussed strategies to implement Agenda 2030's Target 4.7⁴⁴. The event also showcased youth engagement, Canadian culture inclusive of Indigenous Peoples, and Canada's leadership and innovation in the fields of ESD and GCED.



Training Workshop on Introduction and Awareness of Global Citizenship Education, 6 March 2021.
© Afghan National Commission for UNESCO

A workshop held by the **Afghan National Commission and UNESCO**, between 16-18 March 2021, was another initiative in this area. The event focused on the "Introduction and Awareness of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in Kabul for Teachers of Secondary Schools." The workshop was held in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, with support from UNESCO, through the Participation Programme.⁴⁵ It aimed to attain a series of key objectives: to expand teachers' understanding of the key concepts and principles behind GCED, to strengthen the participants' practical skills to design and implement GCED programmes tailored to local contexts, and to educate people in global citizenship and human rights. The workshop gave the participants a thorough understanding of the governance principles and institutions, critical thinking, human rights, solidarity, and respect for cultural diversity. It is hoped that the imparted lessons on the principles of GCED will be shared with other teachers.

⁴¹ UNESCO is the lead UN agency on ESD and responsible for the coordination of the ESD for 2030 Framework. "Framework for the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) beyond 2019," <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370215>

⁴² Global citizenship education, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced>

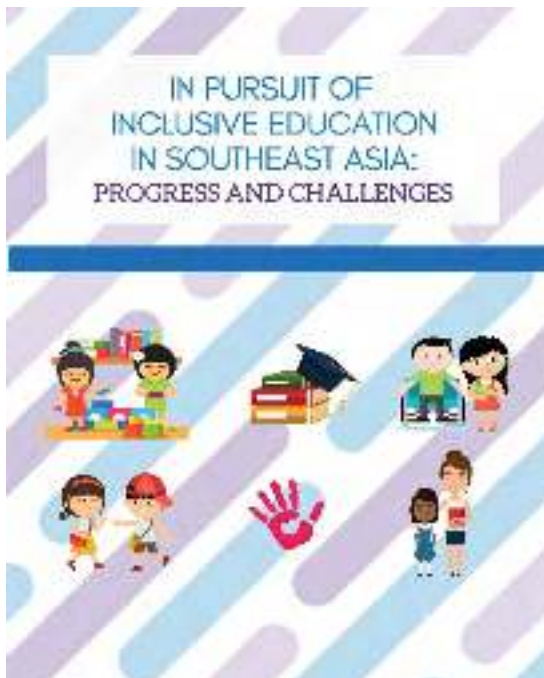
⁴³ <https://en.unesco.org/events/unesco-week-peace-and-sustainable-development-role-education>

⁴⁴ Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

⁴⁵ Participation Programme UNESCO, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/mscontent/participation-programme/>



Primary school students. © Ministry of Education and Higher Education of the Palestinian National Authority



The event led to the dissemination of the publication entitled: "In Pursuit of Inclusive Education in Southeast Asia: Progress and Challenges." © UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines

The **Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** has supported several projects that have created a change in education methodology. An important example is the "Towards Global School" leadership project implemented in 2018-2019 with support from UNESCO through the Participation Programme. The project aimed to equip school leaders with new competencies and skills to face rapid global changes.

The **UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines** promotes education and learning across all ages, socio-economic status, profession, ethnicity, and religion. It supports informal and non-formal modes of education to expand learning opportunities and reach vulnerable groups and underserved communities. In October 2017, the commission, in cooperation with the Department of Education and supported by UNESCO, organised the Regional Conference on Inclusive and Rights-Based Education. The conference provided an opportunity for education authorities to examine various efforts to integrate human rights, peace and global citizenship into the curriculum and education practices. This initiative was designed to reach more widely across the region, not just the Philippines. Representatives from the Ministries of Education in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, and the Philippines, representatives of the commissions and UNESCO, as well as other specialists and experts participated in the conference.

The **Slovak Commission for UNESCO** is actively engaged in activities promoting education among children from the marginalised Roma community. In 2015, the Slovak non-governmental organisation "Svatobor" was awarded the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for their innovative cooperation with the Roma community.⁴⁶ "Svatobor" created a programme aimed at teaching Roma children the skills necessary for a sustainable use of land, and development of local agriculture. The commission is

⁴⁶ UNESCO International Literacy Prizes, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/literacy/prizes>



Pupils learning the blueprint technique in a chemistry class, Badín, Slovakia. © Badín primary school

also active in supporting the ASPnet schools, counting 22 primary and secondary schools all over Slovakia and four UNESCO chairs. Several more schools are in the application process and some of them are truly inspiring—such as the primary school in Badín where a creative teacher like Ms Lucia Dovalová teaches children how to produce the blueprint or blue-dyeing (inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity) during chemistry classes.

September 2020, the **Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, and the UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office, with initial seed funding from Japan, and supported by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok launched the project, “Learning for Empathy: A teacher exchange and support programme” at the Ministry of Education in “Isurupaya”, Battaramulla. The project’s main goal was to share good practices related to enhancing empathy among students, teachers and the wider community of policy makers and educators in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. This was done in conjunction with the mainstreaming of SSDG 4.7. The project will reach out to 3,000 schools by the end of 2021 and aims to reach 10,000 in the future.



Participants during the “Learning Empathy project”. © Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO

In 2004, the **Polish National Commission for UNESCO** joined the Initiative of Euro-Arab Dialogue, launched under the interregional strategy “Learning to Live Together”. On the national level, the project designed for schools “In the World of Islam”, was set up in collaboration with academics and researchers in the field of multicultural education and Arab and Islamic studies at Warsaw and Jagiellonian Universities, as well Polish Ministries and NGOs. The two-day initial project consisted of lectures and workshop activities devoted to the culture and history of Arab countries and current developments in Arab countries and multicultural education in Poland. More than 900 school children and almost 1,000 teachers participated in the project, which continued for 11 years, providing intensive training and workshops for teachers and students.

The **Chadian National Commission for UNESCO** supported the organisation of a workshop for secondary school girls, aimed at raising their awareness and interest in STEM subjects. The workshop took place in July 2019 in the Chadian capital of N’Djamena. The workshop’s main goal was to encourage young women to take up science careers. This initiative is based on a 2004 survey which outlined a gender imbalance in the representation of students in science courses. The study revealed that the lack of girls in science classes is due to a lack of teachers and mentors in this field. Therefore,



Learning about the art of calligraphy at the regional workshop on intercultural dialogue for teachers in Lublin, October 2013.
© Ilona Morzot/Polish National Commission for UNESCO



High-school girls handling electrical education kits.
© Chadian National Commission for UNESCO



Participants at the International Forum for the 60th Anniversary of UNESCO ASPnet, Korea 2013. © Korean National Commission for UNESCO

in the framework of the Chad-UNESCO cooperation, the country benefited in 2005 from a science teacher training project financed by Japan, in cooperation with the Centre of Excellence in Micro-science of Cameroon, using micro-science teaching kits. In the same year, two science teacher training colleges were set up in Chad to meet the demand for science teachers. The Chadian National Commission for UNESCO designed this activity to encourage high-school girls to study science, in keeping with the government's policy of encouraging students, particularly girls, to choose scientific subjects. During this workshop, three women doctors in pediatrics, microbiology and paleontology discussed how they overcame gender-related discrimination and prejudices and went on to succeed in their careers. This Chad programme combined UNESCO's commitment to education with their commitment to gender equality, which is a UNESCO Global Priority.

In the 1960s, the Republic of Korea launched a targeted approach to education to enhance international understanding. In 2000, the **Korean National Commission for UNESCO** supported the creation of the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre. This project took shape through an agreement between the Government of the Republic of Korea and UNESCO to promote and develop Education for International Understanding (EIU), which has now acquired the broader name of GCED.⁴⁷ In this context, for the Republic of Korea, ASPnet plays a leading role in spreading the key principles of EIU/GCED. The network grew from four schools in 1961 to 592 schools in 2021.

The UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) is a driver for innovation and quality in education, connecting educational institutions around the world. More than 11,500 ASPnet member schools in 182 countries work in support of international understanding, peace, intercultural dialogue, sustainable

⁴⁷ <https://un-rok.org/about-un/offices/unesco-apceiu/>

development and quality education in practice.⁴⁸ The schools create local, but also international projects, facilitate exchanges, and share good practices. In the context of the pandemic, where education has been affected heavily, the role of ASPnet has been brought to the forefront.

In 1988, on the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the **Spanish National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO** organised a contest with the participation of ASPnet. The event aimed to focus on educational experiences for international understanding and peace. The winning project came from the Santiago Sobrequés High School Institute in Gerona. Through the platform “Non-Violent Students of the Sobrequés Institute” (ENVIS), the school prepared a traveling exhibition of 70 panels, addressing issues such as refugees, institutions and people who have contributed to peace-building and human rights activists. The student activities were presented at an international congress on training of teachers and professionals in teaching human rights and peace, which took place the same year in Geneva.

With the announcement of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014⁴⁹, the **Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO**, under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Higher Education, organised a three-day ASPnet Youth Forum on Peace and Sustainable Development. The event, which took place in April 2012, brought together ASPnet National Coordinators, teachers, and students from six Euro-Arab countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Jordan, Lebanon and Oman). Participation in the forum was preceded by developing twinned projects established between schools in two different countries on the following themes: “Cultural diversity” (Denmark-Lebanon); “Environment issues and actions: reforestation” (France-Lebanon), “Thinking globally—



Two ENVIS students explaining the exhibition on Human Rights, Geneva.
© Spanish National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO



Youth Forum Poster. © Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO

Acting locally”—a dialogue between students and adults “Making illiteracy a story” (Germany-Lebanon); “Water management: Water collection”; the wastewater project-water conservation mission in a sustainable eco-village (Jordan-Lebanon); and “Heritage: Customs and traditions” (Oman-Lebanon).

For Lithuania and other countries, the represents a good opportunity for many countries to test innovative learning scenarios and processes. In 2015, the **Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO**, through the Participation Programme, implemented a novel project entitled: “Integrating Open Badge Standard in UNESCO ASPnet Schools in Lithuania.” The idea was to understand and recognise more achievements in non-formal education. The schools integrated digital badges, which helped systematically plan students’ learning, monitor progress, evaluate, and award achievements. Digital badges are visual representations of learning outcomes and achievements (representing skills, knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors)

⁴⁸ UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network.
<https://aspnet.unesco.org/en-us/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴⁹ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd/un-decade-of-esd>



Open Badge Standard in UNESCO ASPnet Schools.
© Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO



Meeting of UNESCO ASPnet Portuguese-speaking African
Countries and Portugal, 2011.
© Cape Verdean National Commission for UNESCO

online. Each individual badge has attached information with a link to a description, assessment criteria and evidence of learning. A platform creating Open Badges is used as a connection between students and teachers to issue and claim a badge after accomplishing a learning task in a lesson, during an informal time at school or during an extracurricular activity. The badge can be stored and shared by students online. This is a great indicator of what can be achieved by creating digital learning environments within the ASPnet.

The UNESCO Associated Schools Networks is very important for a distinct regional category of schools: Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP). To consolidate the exchanges between these countries, the **Cape Verdean National Commission for UNESCO**, with the support of the National Commissions for UNESCO of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau, organised a meeting of UNESCO ASPnet PLOP and Portugal. The event, funded by the Participation Programme 2010/2011, was held in Praia, Republic of Cabo Verde, in November 2011. The two main themes were: “Water: common heritage and education” and “Co-operation: networks and partnerships.” The meeting set the stage for expanding the network’s activities to include cultural initiatives, for both tangible and intangible Lusophone cultural heritage.

Egypt was one of the first member states to join UNESCO in 1946. The **Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO** therefore has a long history of collaborating with the organisation. Its education activities also focus on the ASPnet, which currently numbers 275 members, clubs for UNESCO and active UNESCO chairs. The UNESCO Cairo Office is also the Regional Bureau for Sciences in the Arab States as well as the Cluster Office for Egypt and Sudan. The Bureau for Sciences and the National Commission recently inaugurated a new headquarters in the same building, generously provided by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

In March 2002, the **Kuwait National Commission for UNESCO** held an Education and Teaching Symposium

entitled: “Behavioural Phenomena and the Impact of the Internet on Adolescents.” In the same context, the Ministry of Education of the State of Kuwait conducted a workshop at the Ministry of Education Theatre in Shuwaikh entitled: “Education Motives for 2020: Quality of Education and Improvement of Education Outcomes in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries,” organised by the Kuwait National Commission for UNESCO. Along with high-level guests, the conference welcomed teachers and representatives of ASPnet.

In 2014, the **Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO** established the “Prizes for Educational Contribution in Border and Remote Areas of Greece”. The initiative’s main objective was to reward primary school teachers working in less accessible areas of Greece, facing various social and economic problems. Since 2014, approximately fifty teachers have been awarded for their exceptional educational work. Their contribution significantly added to the promotion of UNESCO’s values and priorities, such as the protection of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the rapprochement of cultures and the protection of the environment. The prize supports the incorporation of UNESCO’s mission into schools situated in less accessible regions, which contributes to the organisation’s global mission. The prize is usually awarded annually by the UNESCO Assistant Directors General for Education.

While many initiatives focused on students, some of the earliest seminars and initiatives focused on teachers. For instance, as early as 1960, one important seminar was held in Turkey, Bursa that demonstrates the key role of international cooperation in this area. Entitled: “International Young Teachers Seminar,” the event was supported by UNESCO, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Ministry of National Education of Turkey and the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO.

A more recent project with the same agenda took place in Uganda, between 2008-2014. This was entitled: “The Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan



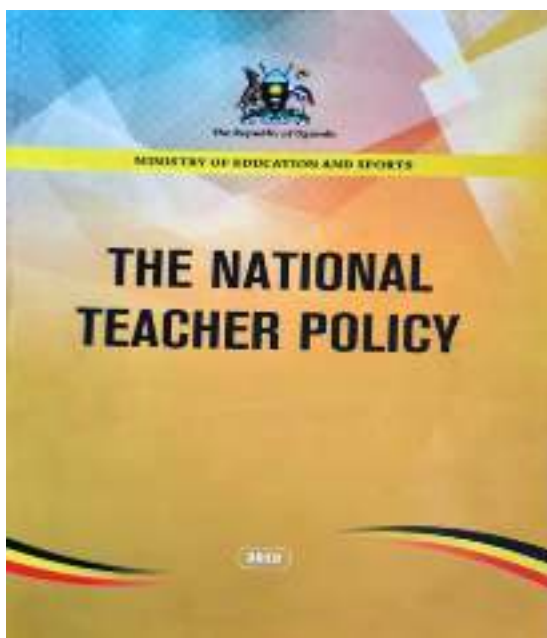
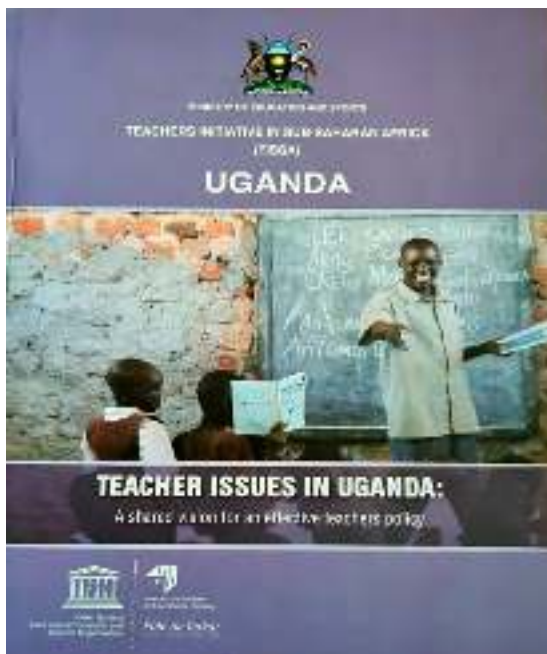
The Bureau of Sciences in Arab States and the Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO, Egypt.
© Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO



The Centre of Historical Documents, Museums and Libraries of Amiri Diwan.
© Kuwait National Commission for UNESCO



Prizes for Educational Contribution in border and remote areas of Greece.
© Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO



Copies of the TISSA diagnostic study report and National Teacher Policy in Uganda.

© Uganda National Commission for UNESCO

Africa Diagnostic Study on Teacher Issues.” In cooperation with the **Uganda National Commission for UNESCO**, this was a direct outcome of a 2006 UNESCO Programme: “Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA)”.⁵⁰ The study aimed to support member states to develop effective and sustainable teacher policies and programmes in the region. In most Sub-Saharan African countries, including Uganda, there was a lack of a holistic vision for the different facets of the teaching profession. The TTISSA identified other key problems such as the absence of dialogue, absenteeism, attrition rates, and inadequate training, which led to ineffective teacher policies. It also outlined practices that contributed to ineffective student learning. The findings of the TTISSA diagnostic report, and its recommendations, have greatly influenced recent actions in the education sector in Uganda, particularly concerning teachers’ professional development. The report’s findings led to the development of a comprehensive National Teachers Policy as well as to the creation of a Teacher Management Information System (TMIS) and the strengthening of Education Management Information System overall. Uganda now has teacher competence profiles for Early Childhood Development, Primary and Secondary Schools and evolved strategies for continuous curriculum development.

In 2014, Liberia confronted another pandemic that upended people’s lives: the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). The **Liberian National Commission for UNESCO** and the Ministry of Education immediately carried out a wide EVD preventative education exercise that facilitated changes in attitudes and practices in the lives of students and youth. With support from the UNESCO emergency fund, the National Commission supported the UNESCO/Ministry of Education Ebola Prevention Sensitisation Project, which ran from October-December 2014. The aim was to spread EVD prevention strategies to the Liberian public,

⁵⁰ <https://dakar.iiep.unesco.org/en/teacher-training-initiative-sub-saharan-africa-ttissa>

especially to the school-age population (including in-school and out-of-school children). This was both a communication and a practical campaign, in which radio EVD-awareness jingles, both in English and vernacular, were accompanied by installation of hand-washing stations, distribution of sanitation supplies and sanitation of classrooms. Health science teachers emphasized the importance of hygiene and preventive education against infectious diseases. The project's success was immediate, with the country seeing a sharp reduction of the infection rate in schools. It is important to point out that the campaign also focused on out-of-school youth and more disadvantaged members of society. In the wake of the current global Covid-19 pandemic, Liberia's experience in raising awareness to limit the outbreak can also be viewed as a best practice for other countries, in the region and beyond.

The Covid-19 pandemic changed most of our previously held assumptions about the world. Although its impact was global, it affected some countries and social sectors more than others.

The **Guinean National Commission for UNESCO** has worked closely with a number of local NGOs to implement training and awareness-raising programmes. These collaborations proved extremely useful in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Between 2019-2020 the commission supported a series of training sessions, organised in collaboration with DABAKA—VISION 2025, ASIFAM, Association for the Development of the Littoral, Association Manden GNAGA, Guinean Association of University Women Graduates. In 2021, most activities changed to awareness-raising campaigns on Covid-19 and methods of prevention.



Hon. Minister for Education and Sports/First Lady officially receiving the Teacher Information Management System (TMIS) equipment from Rosie Agoi, Secretary-General of the Uganda National Commission for UNESCO.
© Uganda National Commission for UNESCO



The Secretary-General of the Liberian National Commission for UNESCO displaying sanitary materials being distributed to schools through the counties.
© Liberian National Commission for UNESCO



Raising awareness about the Covid-19 pandemic in the four natural regions of the Republic of Guinea.
© Guinean National Commission for UNESCO



Culture

Nubia campaign, 1968 .
© UNESCO / Dominique Roger

Carlos Fuentes Macías once said that “culture consists of connections, not of separations.”⁵¹ UNESCO facilitates connections through the safeguarding of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. For UNESCO, culture is crucial both to the promotion of mutual understanding and peace, as well as the achievement of sustainable development.

“At a time when billions of people are physically separated from one another, culture has brought us together, keeping us connected and shortening the distance between us.”

*Mr Ernesto Ottone Ramirez,
Assistant Director-General for Culture*

Several key conventions and recommendations underpin UNESCO’s efforts and the work of National Commissions in this regard. They have been crucial tools in supporting countries and communities to build capacities, develop national and local standards and legal frameworks, encourage knowledge sharing and dialogue, and strengthen advocacy for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and the diversity of cultural expressions in all their forms.

The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict⁵² was the first international convention dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage in times of conflict and enshrines the idea that “any damage to cultural property, irrespective of the people it belongs to, is a damage to the cultural heritage of all humanity”. In 1970, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property⁵³ made it clear that cultural property needs to be protected, and not only in times of conflict, but also in times of peace. The 1970 Convention, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, has been crucial in rallying international efforts to fight the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

In 1954, the decision to build the Aswan Dam, which would flood the Upper Nile Valley and many of its 3000-year-old Nubian monuments, started an international campaign led by UNESCO, at the request of Egypt and Sudan. The Nubia Campaign⁵⁴ was the starting point for the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage⁵⁵, and the establishment of the World Heritage List.⁵⁶ The World Heritage Convention put forward the innovative concept of “Outstanding Universal Value”,

⁵² <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage/convention-and-protocols/1954-hague-convention/>

⁵³ http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13039&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁵⁴ International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/280/?id=172&>

⁵⁵ Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

⁵⁶ World Heritage List, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

⁵¹ Carlos Fuentes Macías, *Myself with Others: Selected Essays*.

the idea that some sites are so exceptional that they represent the common heritage of all of humanity.

The adoption of 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage⁵⁷ highlighted the richness of the world's underwater cultural heritage and enabled Member States to better protect it. The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage⁵⁸ enriched and enhanced the concept of heritage yet again. The 2003 Convention safeguards the uses, representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, recognize as an integral part of their cultural heritage. Such intangible heritage can include oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional knowledge craftsmanship and techniques. The UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity aims at better identifying and safeguarding living heritage around the world.

The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions⁵⁹ was the first international instrument of its kind to recognize the specific nature of cultural goods and services, including both their economic and cultural value, as well as their immense potential for sustainable development. A central objective of the 2005 Convention was to create an enabling environment in which artists, cultural professionals, practitioners and citizens worldwide can create, produce, distribute, disseminate and enjoy a broad range of cultural goods, services and activities. The 2005 Convention has taken on particular relevance in light of the growth of the creative economy, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on artists and cultural professionals.

Culture and the National Commissions

The coordinating work of National Commissions is foundational for UNESCO to fulfill its mandate in the field of culture. Their input is crucial for the implementation of the cultural conventions in locally adapted ways and supporting the organisation in raising the general awareness of the role that culture plays for security, peace, and sustainability.

One important step towards an even richer cooperation was the 1960 launch of the Nubia Campaign that thrust Egypt into the international spotlight and drew widespread support from UNESCO's other member states. One of Egypt's most celebrated sculptors, Ahmed Osman, participated in UNESCO's Nubian campaign by developing techniques for cutting and reassembling the stone blocks of the Temple of Abu Simbel. This has since become an ongoing cooperation as UNESCO, together with the **Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO** actively contributed to the opening of the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation (NMEC) in April 2021.



The Pharaohs' Golden Parade of 22 Royal Mummies - National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation. © NMEC

⁵⁷ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/underwater-cultural-heritage/2001-convention/official-text/>

⁵⁸ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>

⁵⁹ <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention/texts>



UNESCO's Nubian International safeguarding campaign Abu Simbel temples, Egypt.
© UNESCO Archives

The **National Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina for UNESCO** supported the country's focus on culture and cultural heritage in its development programmes. The conference of Ministers of Culture of Southeast Europe entitled: "Cultural Heritage—a Bridge Towards a Shared Future" was held for the first time in 2004 in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina under UNESCO's patronage, at the opening of the reconstructed Old Bridge. This platform enabled the improvement of cooperation in this area and showed that culture knows no borders—culture builds bridges. The initiative is active today and operating

as the Council of Ministers of Culture of Southeast Europe—Culture for Development since 2014.⁶⁰

The establishment of this framework for cooperation enabled the implementation of various joint programmes, projects, and initiatives among the countries of Southeast Europe. One of these successful projects was the inscription of Stećci—Medieval Tombstones graveyards on the World Heritage List, a

⁶⁰ Council of Ministers of Culture in the South East Europe. <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/council-ministers-culture-south>

joint cross-border activity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

The **Slovak Commission for UNESCO** was formed in January 1993, shortly after Slovakia became independent. In the early days of the commission, the greatest success story was the inscription of three cultural sites on the World Heritage List in December 1993: the Historic Town of Banská Štiavnica and the Technical Monuments in its vicinity; Levoča, Spišský Hrad and the Associated Cultural Monuments, and Vlkolínec. Two more inscriptions followed: the Bardejov Town Conservation Reserve in 2000 and the Wooden Churches of the Slovak Part of the Carpathian Mountain Area in 2008. The UNESCO designation brought socio-economic development to the regions, inspired sustainable tourism and served as a motivation for future inscriptions. It also raised interest for enhanced conservation of cultural sites around the country. These World Heritage properties are currently the most recognised UNESCO designations in Slovakia.

More recently, the most remarkable success story of Slovak cooperation with UNESCO has been the inclusion of the city of Košice in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network⁶¹ for the field of media arts. This has enhanced international scientific cooperation, and, on a national level, it has highlighted the importance of culture for the sustainable development of cities.

Furthermore, over the years Slovakia has greatly benefited from multiple inscriptions in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, with seven items now inscribed. These inscriptions have not only contributed to the preservation, but also popularisation of these elements, making them truly a living heritage.

Georgia's commitment to the promotion of cultural heritage was reinforced when three sites were inscribed on the World Heritage List between 1994 and 1996. The **Georgian National Commission for UNESCO**



The Mostar Bridge.
© Mr Siniša Šešum, for the National Commission of BiH for UNESCO



Summer School on Management of UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Site— in cooperation with the Visegrad countries. Solving problems of the Historic Town of Banská Štiavnica and the Technical Monuments in its Vicinity management by participants of the event, July 18, 2015, Banská Štiavnica.
© Lubica Pinčíková

supported a multidisciplinary pilot project implemented in the framework of tripartite cooperation agreement between Georgia, World Heritage Centre and World Bank. The project set a long-term planning framework for the development of management mechanisms and capacities for heritage protection. This was considered as a model for future capacity-building activities in the region.

⁶¹ <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/>



Kasubi tombs before the fire



Destroyed by fire, March, 2010



Construction of concrete poles



Raised part of the structure



Thatching work (Wamara tombs)



Decorative ceiling structure (Wamara tombs)

© Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage (JCIC)

One of the key projects in which the **Uganda National Commission for UNESCO** was actively involved was the Revitalization and Reconstruction of the Royal Tombs of Buganda Kingdom at Kasubi.⁶² The tombs are inscribed in 2001 on UNESCO World Heritage sites and cover almost 30 hectares of hillside within Kampala. In March 2010, a fire destroyed much of the complex. Following this incident, the site was re-inscribed on World Heritage Sites in Danger. In 2013, UNESCO signed the Plan of Operation with the Government of Uganda for the project: “Technical and financial assistance for the reconstruction of Muzibu-Azaala Mpanga, Architectural masterpiece of the tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi, Uganda, World Heritage Property in Danger”, generously supported by the Japan-Funds-in-Trust. The project has contributed to the site’s restoration of authenticity and sustainability, the development of a disaster risk management systems as well as documentation of the thatching and reconstruction process. It is also an example of how UNESCO can bring together countries across the world to help preserve their own local heritage for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

To support the implementation of the 1972 Convention, the **Botswana National Commission for UNESCO**, together with the Ministry of Basic Education, Department of National Museum and Monuments as well as private partners, contributed to the organisation of a Work Camp at Tsodilo Hills World Heritage Site in 2016. The volunteers carried out conservation work within the World Heritage Site to contribute to the site’s management. The team managed to collect materials within and outside the site and restore the worst-damaged part of the access road from the entrance of the site to the Hills.

The **National Commission of Uruguay for UNESCO** actively supported a key project that integrates World Heritage sites, sustainable tourism, and education. Launched in 2017, *Rutas UNESCO Uruguay* is a unique initiative that connects world heritage sites, biosphere reserves and geoparks by enhancing access and promoting comprehensive knowledge about the sites and their role in Uruguay and the world. *Rutas UNESCO Uruguay* connect Historic District of Colonia del Sacramento, the Geopark in the department of Flores and the Anglo Cold Storage Plant in Fray Bentos.

⁶² <https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/286>



Volunteers at Tsodilo Hills World Heritage Site.
© Botswana National Commission for UNESCO



Banados del Este Biosphere reserve.
© Daniela Hernandez

In connecting these key areas, the National Commission of Uruguay for UNESCO supports an immersive experience, by promoting the involvement of local communities, civil society, and youth groups.⁶³

Kenya currently has seven natural and cultural sites designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The **Kenya National Commission for UNESCO** played a crucial role in the designations of these sites by raising awareness and coordination of the ratification of the 1972 Convention. The commission is very active in its implementation through awareness-raising events such as tree planting and bee-keeping activities, management plans development and cultural festivals as well as promoting Swahili cultural expressions during the celebrations. The success in designating so many sites is largely due to the active efforts of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO.

The importance of inscribing different sites on the World Heritage List is first and foremost an acknowledgment of how the past can guide us towards a better future, as well as preserving the past in and of



Dr Evangeline Njoka Secretary-General KNATCOM leading a tree-planting exercise at the Sacred Forests of the Mijikenda.
© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO

⁶³ Rutas UNESCO, Ministerio de Educación y Cultura of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay. <https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-educacion-cultura/comunicacion/noticias/rutas-unesco-1>



Former UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines Secretary General Preciosa Soliven addresses the participants during the Review and Stakeholders Workshop in July 2003, Ifugao.
© UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines



Book Cover for "The Rites of Passage: Marriage & Naming Ceremonies in Sierra Leone."
© Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO

itself. In 1995, the **UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines** supported the inscription of Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras in the World Heritage List as an outstanding example of a living cultural landscape. It epitomises the blending of the physical, ecological, sociocultural, economic, religious, and political environments. In 2001, the World Heritage Committee approved Emergency Technical Cooperation Assistance Programme (ETCAP) upon its inclusion to the World Heritage in Danger List. Following a host of conservation and safeguarding programmes, the site has been formally removed from the endangered List during the 36th Session of the World Heritage Committee in 2012.

Palestine's accession to the 1972 Convention, with the active support of the **Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** and involvement of national partners, led to the inscription of many religious and archaeological sites on the World Heritage List. In 2012, the site "Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem" was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List for its outstanding universal value. The sites, "Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines—Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir" and "Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town" (which includes the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The tomb of the Patriarchs) were inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2014 and in 2017 respectively.

In 2004, the **Saint Lucia National Commission for UNESCO** played a key role in the inclusion of Saint Lucia's Pitons Management Areas (PMA) on the World Heritage List and continues to contribute actively to its safeguarding.

The **Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO** supported the placement of several sites on UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List. It also contributed to the publication of a book entitled: "The Rites of Passage: Marriage and Naming Ceremonies in Sierra Leone." One of the book's main conclusions pointed to the fact that Sierra Leonean cultures, as practised by the different ethnic groups, portray a clear mix of the influences of both Christian and Muslim religious practices, which can be an opportunity to work through differences for peace.

The **Mauritius National Commission for UNESCO** supported the ratification of the 1972 Convention and added two important sites to the World Heritage List in 2006 and 2008: Aapravasi Ghat, an immigration depot to replace slaves with indentured labourers, and Le Morne Cultural Landscape, a spectacular scenic area where former slaves resisted and hid. It also contributed to the enriching of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage with four new listings, including the last one, Segha tambour Chagos, a form of song, which was added in 2019.



Bunce Island was a British slave trading post in the 18th century. © robertonencini/Shutterstock.com



International Slave Route Monument at the foot of the Le Morne Brabant Mountain, Mauritius. © KKulikov/Shutterstock.com



The Acropolis, inscribed in 1987, is one of the most famous World Heritage Sites in Europe. © anyaivanova/Shutterstock.com

The **Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** endorsed the addition of the archaeological city of Al Zubarah to the World Heritage List in 2013. The site is one of the best-preserved examples of an 18th and 19th century Gulf merchant town as a then thriving pearl fishing and trading port.

Support for UNESCO's work in the field of culture is often represented by inter-regional cooperation initiatives, in which National Commissions play a key role as coordinating entities. One such successful projects, supported by the **Bahrain National Commission for UNESCO**, is the creation of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage, located in Manama, in 2012. It is the only one of its kind in the Arab world. It aims to support the efforts of member states to achieve reliable and balanced representation of the region's cultural and natural heritage on the World Heritage List, strengthening the protection and management of properties inscribed by mobilising regional and international financial support, as well as raising awareness for World Heritage in the

region. The centre worked with representatives from Lebanon, Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia and Jordan. In Lebanon, since the tragic 2020 explosion in Beirut, the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage has contributed to international efforts to protect the city's cultural heritage. In Yemen, the centre implemented several projects with the General Authority for the Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen, focused on creating a national cultural heritage inventory and training workshops.

The documentation activity and collection of data took place over six months in different cities in 22 governorates in Yemen. In Algeria, the centre provided assessment for the site of the "Defensive Fortifications of the City of Oran", with the aim of including it on the preliminary list of heritage sites in Algeria, and for its nomination for entry into the UNESCO World Heritage List. The centre works to provide technical assistance to Tunisia in the field of management in cooperation with the World Fund for Antiquities and Heritage. This prepares management

plans for three sites: Duchess, Sfax and Kairouan. In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the centre supported the preservation of the Wadi Rum site. The Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage also organised three virtual conferences on the reconstruction of cultural heritage sites after the armed conflict in the Arab countries. It also organised, in cooperation with the International Council on Antiquities and Sites (ICOMOS) and the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, the first workshop for site managers and contacts in Arab countries to integrate methodologies for sustainable development goals with efforts to implement the World Heritage Convention in the Arab countries.

The **Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO** organised and implemented, in cooperation with the **German Commission for UNESCO** and the German Archaeological Institute, a cultural programme into the framework of the “European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018”. The programme, entitled: “Sharing Heritage—Be part and share,” worked with two school classes, one in Berlin and the other one in Chalkida, under the guidance of four young experts, two from each country. They exchanged views on European heritage and worked together on a digital presentation of their outcomes. This youth-led project raised awareness on the topic of heritage, while promoting the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (target 11.4) for the protection and safeguarding of the world’s cultural and natural heritage. Furthermore, it established a strong and long-term relationship between the two schools and the participating students.

The **Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO** pays special attention to the problems of World Cultural and Natural Heritage as it hosts 30 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. In 2012, with the commission’s direct participation, the Russian Federation hosted the 36th session of the World Heritage Committee, which was held in St. Petersburg, Kazan, and the Krasnodar region. The meeting gathered more than 2,000 people from 119 countries. In 2022, the Republic of Tatarstan (Kazan), an active partner of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO, will host the 45th Anniversary Session of



Al Zubarah Archaeological Site. © Qatar Museum

the Committee, which also coincides with the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Convention.

In 2016, the UNESCO Executive Board reviewed a Russia-drafted resolution: “UNESCO’s role in safeguarding and preserving Palmyra and other Syrian world heritage sites,” and unanimously adopted a decision, which urged coordinated action with all stakeholders. A group of Russian experts representing the Likhachev Research Institute for Cultural and Natural Heritage at the Russian Ministry of Culture were already working in Palmyra. The group conducted a preliminary study of the destroyed monuments, using UNESCO methods, and will submit its report to the Secretariat.

In 2018, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) entered a partnership with UNESCO to rehabilitate and reconstruct the wealth of cultural heritage that had been destroyed in the Old City of Mosul.

The project is led in collaboration with the **United Arab Emirates National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** and focuses on three sites—the Al Nouri Mosque complex, Al Tahera Church and Al Sa’aa church. Sustainability lies at the heart of this initiative. The project aims not only to restore Mosul’s grandeur visually and architecturally, but to



The Al Nouri Mosque complex. © UNESCO

create skills development and professional education programmes. The project has so far created more than 600 employment and training opportunities and is set to reach its target of 1,000 by its conclusion in 2023. Through the creation of a museum site, as well as educational and community spaces, the project will contribute to tourism and Mosul's economy well into the future. It will also lay the ground for more sustainable reconciliation and peace.

The **Cambodian National Commission for UNESCO**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, supported the creation of a programme entitled: “The Culture Education,” to be implemented between 2020–2021. The project aims to raise awareness about the importance and value of cultural heritage for the younger generation. It also encourages students to preserve their local cultural heritage. The National Commission provided a guidebook on cultural heritage and training programmes in this field. The first students to benefit

from this project came from five public schools in the Kampong Thom province. The project will reach out to more than 300 students who will visit the Cambodian World Heritage site of Sambor Prei Kuk Temple founded in the 6th–7th century. The project is still ongoing. When the Covid-19 pandemic is under control or ends, the guidebook will be distributed to all provincial culture departments. It is expected to be used as one of many reference textbooks for training programmes on cultural heritage in the region.

Although fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of increasing globalisation. The **Turkish National Commission for UNESCO** endorsed the organisation of the third Roundtable of Ministers of Culture—“Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Mirror of Cultural Diversity” in 2002, in Istanbul. The conference gathered 74 Ministers, and 36 other State representatives, and accelerated the political debates on intangible cultural heritage and cultural diversity to put a greater emphasis on the urgent need for action. The conference adopted the Istanbul Declaration, which the 2003 Convention refers to in its preamble.

The **Canadian Commission for UNESCO** works to build awareness about intangible cultural heritage (ICH), and its immense value for the world. The commission produced and collaborated on three publications related to ICH: *Understanding Intangible Cultural Heritage*,⁶⁴ *Municipalities at the forefront: Protecting Intangible Cultural Heritage*,⁶⁵ and *Indigenous Living*.⁶⁶ More recently, the commission began to convene Canadian organisations that are accredited to the 2003 Convention. These organisations can play an important role in promoting ICH in Canada to share good practices.

⁶⁴ <https://en.ccunesco.ca/blog/2019/10/understanding-intangible-cultural-heritage>

⁶⁵ <https://en.ccunesco.ca/blog/2019/12/municipalities-at-the-forefront-protecting-intangible-cultural-heritage>

⁶⁶ <https://fpcc.ca/resource/indigenous-living-heritage-in-canada/>



“El Güegüense” was proclaimed a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.
© Nicaraguan National Commission for UNESCO

Safeguarding initiatives are a core component for UNESCO’s World Heritage inscriptions. In November 2005, the **Nicaraguan National Commission for UNESCO** contributed to the country’s efforts in protecting *El Güegüense* as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. *El Güegüense* is a comedy dance of colonial origin and is part of the festivities in honour of San Sebastian in the city of Diriamba. Every November, various activities are held as the “Semana Cultural de El Güegüense”. The commission’s efforts resulted in the Action Plan for the safeguarding of the legacy of *El Güegüense*.⁶⁷ It also led to the creation of the National Council for its protection, conservation and promotion; an inventory of its cultural elements by awarding of the medal “Guardadores de la Tradición”; and for the

⁶⁷ Action Plan for the safeguarding the legacy of *El Güegüense*, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/projects/action-plan-for-the-safeguarding-of-el-gueguense-00034>



Student visiting an excavation trench at Sambor Prei Kuk Archeological Site (Culture Education Programme). © Cambodian National Commission for UNESCO



A Performance of Kutiyattam.
© Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO

rehabilitation of the “Casa de Cultura in Diriamba” for traditional dances.

Intangible Cultural Heritage also plays an important role for the **Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO** as it seeks to add to the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In 2008, the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 Convention inscribed three new elements and traditions, Kutiyattam (Sanskrit Theatre), Vedic Chanting and Ramlila—the traditional performance of Ramayana.

The **Eswatini National Commission for UNESCO** supports documentation of the intangible cultural heritage throughout the country. This takes the form of trainings, assessments and collaborations with all stakeholders and partners. One example is a workshop co-organised with the Ministry of Health of Eswatini on the documentation of Swazi traditional healing in 2009.



The World Nomad Games opening ceremony.
© Kyrgyz National Commission for UNESCO



Kyrgyz nomad girls riding a Bactrian Camel at the World Nomad Games, 2018.
© Erika Bisbocci/Shutterstock.com

The **National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO** continues to play an important role in the promotion, and the safeguarding, of ICH. One of the best-known achievements is the support for the Nomad Games, which not only became a successful platform for ICH bearers and practitioners, but also contributes to the livelihoods of its people. The Nomad Games began as a provincial and national level festival. In 2012 the Games started to attract more attention, which led to the launch of World Nomad Games (WNG), bringing together not only local communities, but also traditional game practitioners from around the world. Three editions of the Games were organised in 2014, 2016 and 2018, the last under UNESCO's patronage.

The **Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO** is particularly active in supporting intangible cultural heritage and creative economies. In 2014, it organised a series of events that aimed to highlight the historic and cultural value of Jamdani, a fine muslin textile produced in Bangladesh for centuries, and which has been part of the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2013.⁶⁸ The initiative aimed to create better understanding between traders and weavers in the process of production and marketing. The National Art Gallery of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy also hosted a three-day exhibition dedicated to Jamdani. The project opened avenues for better understanding among the traders and the weavers of Jamdani as well as new entrepreneurial cooperation and opportunities.

The **Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO** also supports an increase of the country's presence on the Intangible Cultural Heritage list. Reggae music was added to the list in December 2018, receiving support from more than 190 State Parties, demonstrating the genre's lasting influence around the world. This designation comes three years after Kingston was named an UNESCO City of Music in 2015.⁶⁹ In the same year

⁶⁸ Traditional art of Jamdani weaving,
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-art-of-jamdani-weaving-00879>

⁶⁹ <https://citiesofmusic.net/city/kingston/>



Jamdani Weaving.
© Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO

the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park in Jamaica was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a key step which recognised both the region's natural and cultural heritage.

Turkmenistan has established itself in recent years as an active and dynamic partner which participated in many projects and programmes aimed at developing international humanitarian cooperation and intercultural dialogue. **The Turkmen National Commission for UNESCO** fully supports this approach. Turkmenistan has ratified the 1972 Convention as well as the 2003 Convention. The country is currently preparing nominations for unique examples of cultural values such as “The Art of painting Akhal-Teke horses,” “The Art of breeding Alabai dogs”, “Felt art of Turkmen,” “The art of embroidery,” “Turkmen Blacksmithing” and many others. Turkmenistan is also actively involved in the preparation of the serial transnational nomination “Silk Road: Zaravshan-Karakum Corridor” for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Exhibitions and art events are good opportunities to showcase a country's cultural heritage. In July 2016, the Permanent Delegation of Nigeria to UNESCO, the **Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO**, the Nigerian Government, and representatives of the Nigerian private sector and other donor partners, organised an exhibition in Paris entitled: “Durbar Festival in Northern Nigeria”. Participants could learn



Creative Cities sub-committee in Jamaica. © MCGES



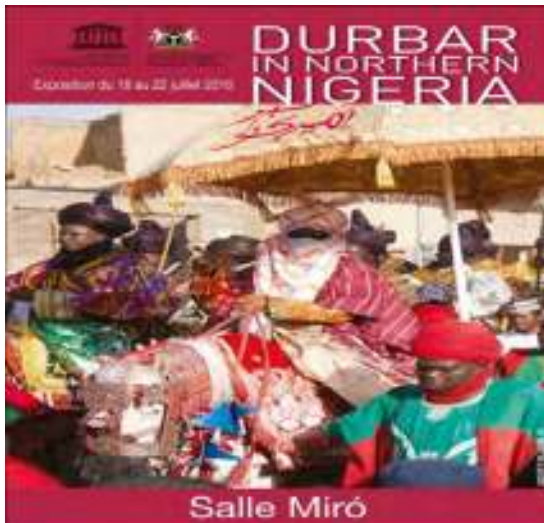
Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar (1118-57).
© Turkmen National Commission for UNESCO / Hasan Magadov



Great Kyz Kala.
© Turkmen National Commission for UNESCO/Hasan Magadov



Former Emir of Kano, HRH. Alh. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Minister of Information and Culture, Alh. Lai Mohammed and other dignitaries inspecting the art exhibition of Durbar in Northern Nigeria in Paris, France. © Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO



An art exhibition of Durbar in Northern Nigeria in Paris, France. © Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO



A workshop on community-based inventorying of ICH traditions, 2019. © Maldives National Commission for UNESCO

more about Nigeria and its cultural heritage, as well as meet artists and hear about tourism possibilities.

The **National Commission for UNESCO of the Republic of North Macedonia** supported an exhibition on UNESCO's premises ("Miro" Hall), bringing the public closer to modern North Macedonian art. The exhibition, entitled: "Dialogues: Macedonian Art Today," took place in March 2003 and gathered a number of high-level officials. In the field of World Heritage in 2010, the commission, in partnership with UNDP, translated the UNESCO Handbook on "World Heritage in young hands" into the Macedonian language. The same year, the Ministry of Education and Science conducted a pilot project promoting the translated publication to 10 schools in the country. The course aimed to introduce UNESCO's Conventions on natural as well as tangible and intangible cultural heritage to young learners.

Safeguarding initiatives, particularly when it comes to ICH, take the form of workshops for capacity-building for the **Maldives National Commission for UNESCO**. The commission contributed to a four-day workshop on community-based inventorying of ICH traditions, which was held at the National Art Gallery in April/May 2019. It was a very successful event, which established a network of individuals, organisations and institutions that are interested in ICH inventorying to advocate additional protections. It helped to identify areas of weakness and opportunities in inventorying in the Maldives, which is a key step for further safeguarding actions.

In October 2019, the **Sint Maarten National Commission for UNESCO**, in collaboration with the Department of Culture, officially launched the first National Intangible Cultural Heritage ICH Inventory of Sint Maarten. The inventory is a major step towards the safeguarding, sharing, and highlighting Sint Maarten's living heritage. The next phase aims to raise awareness about ICH in the country and engage the wider public in its efforts.

The **Saint Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO** supported the new completion of an ICH UNESCO Capacity-Building Project between 2018-2021 entitled: “Strengthening inventory preparation capacity for implementing the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Saint Kitts and Nevis”. This will enable Saint Kitts and Nevis to move to the next stage regarding ICH, and further develop a national ICH policy framework.

The **Colombian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO** also contributed to the promotion of the 2003 Convention. In December 2019, the commission supported the organisation of the 14th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). For the first time in Latin America, the committee of the UNESCO 2003 Convention met in Bogotá, an event attended by approximately 1,200 delegates from the States Parties, NGOs and civil society. This meeting served as a platform to showcase Colombia’s progress in public policies aimed at safeguarding the memory and identity of its communities. It also showed the deep commitment of the Republic of Colombia and the Latin American region to the preservation and promotion of ICH.

The **National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO** is also very active in multilateral cooperation for the safeguarding and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Azerbaijan has three elements of cultural heritage: “Walled City of Baku with the Shirvanshah’s Palace and Maiden Tower,” “Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape,” and “Historic Centre of Sheki with the Khan’s Palace” inscribed on the World Heritage List. It has supported five multinational nominations: “Novruz”, “Flatbread making and sharing culture: Lavash, Katyrma, Jupka, Yufka”, “Art of crafting and playing with Kamantcheh/Kamanche”, “Heritage of Dede Qorqud/ Korkyt Ata/Dede Korkut” and “Art of miniature,” which have been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Delegation of Colombia, led by the Minister of Culture, the Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, Viviane Morales, the Vice Minister of Culture, Jose Ignacio Argote, the Director of Heritage, Alberto Escovar.
© Ministry of Culture of Colombia



Poster of the exhibition: “Dialogues: Macedonian Art Today.”
© National Commission for UNESCO of the Republic of North Macedonia



Tradition cow horn (kachu) players demonstrating use and ritual of cow horn blowing. © Curaçao National Commission for UNESCO/Ken Wong



Ms Marcellia Henry, Secretary-General and Ms Clara Reyes, Head of Culture Department being interviewed after the ICH inventory launch. © Denicio Wyatte



From left: Eszter Csonka-Takács PhD, Director of ICH Directorate of the Hungarian Open Air Museum; Shimeles Tayu, Director of Public Relations at NALA; Selamawit Aragaw Erkihun, Director of Saint Yared Music School; Ahmed Zekaria PhD Ethiopian Studies; Ethiopian National Theatre, 14th June 2019. © Dawit Haileeyesus

The **Curaçao National Commission for UNESCO** collaborated on a project with the Government of the Netherlands, focusing on: “Strengthening the capacities of Suriname and Dutch Caribbean Islands for implementing the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.” The initiative was launched in the Dutch Caribbean islands and Suriname and took place from 2014–2018. The initiative’s main goal was to offer training focused on the 2003 Convention, facilitate national consultations and support community-based inventorying of ICH. More than 30 participants from Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St Eustatius and Sint Maarten, in addition to observers from Anguilla and Suriname, received training as part of UNESCO’s global capacity-building strategy to safeguard intangible heritage, and for its sustainable use. The joint training was an opportunity for participants to share best practices but also discuss the challenges of the convention’s implementation at the sub-regional level.

The **Hungarian National Commission for UNESCO** is active in promoting activities in support of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The commission organised a programme series called: “Intercontinental bridges for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of humanity” that digitised the recordings of traditional music and dance collected by Hungarian researchers in Ethiopia in 1965. During the engagement with tradition bearers, Hungarian folk and ethnomusicologists György Martin and Bálint Sárosi created and collected 3,220 metres of film, 41 hours of sound, 1,014 photos in addition to 200 pages of notes. The Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences digitised this valuable collection, which was then handed over to the Ethiopian Government and other relevant Ethiopian institutions in the form of a professional workshop, and a ceremony held in Addis Ababa in June 2019. Another part of the programme series was a capacity-building seminar held in Hungary for intangible cultural heritage experts from Sub-Saharan African countries. Participants were acquainted with two safeguarding models inscribed on the Register for the Good Safeguarding Practices: the “Táncház method: a Hungarian model for the



Inscription of the Kelaghayi on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. © Elder Farz/Shutterstock.com

transmission of intangible cultural heritage” and the “Safeguarding of the folk music heritage by the Kodály concept” as well as other safeguarding measures and institutions. The programme was implemented by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Directorate of the Hungarian Open-Air Museum.

Designated World Heritage sites often need additional and continuing support, both institutional and financial. To support the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, UNESCO, and European Union, through Euromed Heritage, launched a special “Mediterranean Living Heritage Project” (MedLiHer), which ran from 2009-2012. The project’s main objective was to increase capacity-building in the designated countries, improve regional cooperation and the exchange of skills and good practices. The **Jordan National Commission for Education, Culture and Science**, with the collaboration

of the Ministry of Culture, actively endorsed this multinational project. The commission also organised a workshop on capacity-building for the inventory of ICH in the Madaba Governorate in 2012.

Flemish academics, civil society organisations and civil servants, and members of the **Flemish Commission for UNESCO** have been very committed to the creation and implementation of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Flemish initiatives in this area generated a series of international networking programmes and collaborations, such as the 2010-2014 ‘Living Human Treasures’ project, exhibition and conference⁷⁰; the international conference and publication on the ‘role of brokers, facilitators and mediation’ on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of

⁷⁰ <http://www.livinghumantreasures.be/> - <https://researchportal.vub.be/en/publications/safeguarding-heritage-inspiration-from-the-east-and-game-changers>



Preparing the traditional bread. © Jordanian Ministry of Culture



Marc Vervenne (President of the Flemish Commission for UNESCO) greeting Tim Curtis (Secretary of the 2003 Convention) at the Conference of the Intangible Cultural Heritage & Museums project in Brussels (2020).

© Sophie Nuytten

the Convention⁷¹; and the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums' project (2017–2020).⁷² The Flemish Commission also supported increased awareness for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, submitting the cases of safeguarding carillon culture (making music with bells)⁷³ and ludo-diversity (sporting games). Furthermore, the establishment of an UNESCO Chair on ICH-supported Flemish experts in their contribution to international meetings and capacity-building programmes such as bringing in trained UNESCO facilitators.

The illicit trafficking of cultural property, and the sensitive issue of restitution after colonisation and decolonisation, is an important subject that is receiving renewed attention. A report by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy entitled: "Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Towards a new relational ethics"⁷⁴ was presented during a colloquium held in January 2020 at the Royal Academy of Belgium. This represents an important area of future work for the **Belgian French-speaking and German-speaking Commission for UNESCO**.

The **French National Commission for UNESCO** is an active contributor to UNESCO's work in the field of culture. A highlight of their work was the introduction of the concept of "cultural policy" in UNESCO's culture sector, during the 14th and 15th sessions of the General Conference. Between 1966–1968, the commission organised two seminars on cultural planning, inviting more than 50 countries first to Paris and then to Marseille. This approach was then applied to the "cultural policies of municipalities," on the "Rencontres d'Avignon," supported by the commission from as early as 1967. In the 1960s, these *rencontres* (meetings) played a founding role in the first development of public policies for culture in France. The idea of the "Rencontres d'Avignon" was dreamed up by the French actor and theatre director Jean Vilar. For several mornings each summer, from 1964 to

⁷¹ https://ich.unesco.org/doc/celebration_doc/00082.pdf

⁷² www.ichandmuseums.eu

⁷³ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/safeguarding-the-carillon-culture-preservation-transmission-exchange-and-awareness-raising-01017>

⁷⁴ http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf

1970, he gathered about 40 interlocutors chosen for their “free reflection on the place of culture in contemporary society”. The group, whose composition was renewed in part each year, was made up of local elected officials, state representatives, researchers, sociologists, leaders of associations—mainly those close to popular education, administrators, artists, including people in theatre.⁷⁵

In March 1982, the commission organised the “Rencontres d’Avignon” on cultural policy, which brought together culture ministers from many countries in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Also in 1982, the French National Commission for UNESCO asked artists to contribute to France’s recommendation at the Mexico City world conference on cultural policies. The commission was thus at the forefront of thinking on international cooperation in the field of culture. This led to the adoption of important normative texts by UNESCO, in particular the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. This initiative can be seen as a precursor to the 2004 UNESCO Creative Cities Network. This promotes cooperation among a network of cities, now numbering 246, that utilize creativity and cultural efforts at the local level for sustainable urban development. These efforts promote both SDGs and literacy efforts outside of schools.⁷⁶

In the context of the United Nations International Decade for Cultural Development (1988–1997),⁷⁷ the **Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO** has conducted eight national and four regional seminars aimed at analysing the relationship between culture and socio-economic development at both the macro- and micro-level in Viet Nam. The International Decade supported Viet Nam in creating its cultural development policy.



The birth of cultural policies and the Avignon meetings, carried out under the presidency of Jean Vilar (1964–1970)), presented by Philippe Poirrier (1997), is a work that marks the fiftieth anniversary of the French National Commission for UNESCO. © French National Commission for UNESCO



The 13th Conference of the Viet Nam National Commission for the International Decade for Cultural Development entitled “Viet Nam and the International Decade for Cultural Development” (Ha Noi, 9/1997). © Viet Nam National Commission for UNESCO

One of the most important conferences in UNESCO’s history on cultural policies took place in Stockholm in 1998. Supported by the **Swedish National Commission for UNESCO** and entitled: “Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development,” the conference attracted more than 2,300 participants from 130 different countries. The event established links between culture, development and human rights in a way that was seen as radical and innovative at the time. The gathering strengthened international collaboration in the cultural sector and changed the perspective on cultural policies from being economic-oriented to a human

⁷⁵ Jacques Perret, “La naissance des politiques culturelles et les rencontres d’Avignon sous la présidence de Jean Vilar, 1964–1970,” *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France (BBF)*, 1998, n° 1, p. 133–134.

⁷⁶ <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home>

⁷⁷ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/75606?ln=en>



Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, Stockholm, 1998.

© Swedish National Commission for UNESCO



UNESCO Chair students and professors during the study trip in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Festina lente bridge in Sarajevo (project of students of the Academy of Fine Arts), March 2017.

© Serbian National Commission for UNESCO

rights-based perspective. This new way of seeing culture paved the way for the convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions (2005). The conference also resulted in a concrete action plan for culture and development.

In 2002, the Department for Interculturalism, Art Management and Mediation in South-east Europe (at the University of Arts in Belgrade) was designed to develop intercultural cooperation across the region. The **Commission of the Republic of Serbia for UNESCO** supported this endeavor and endowed a UNESCO university chair in 2004. Its main activity is a joint Master of Arts degree, organised in cooperation and accredited by the University Lyon 2. Supported by several partner universities and cultural organisations across Europe, this programme attracted

around 500 students from more than 30 countries, mostly from the Balkans (from Albania to Moldova), but also within Europe (10 EU countries) and across the world (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Senegal, Benin, Egypt, Kuwait, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, India). The programme became one of the 10 recognised UNESCO Chairs to the implementation of the Convention 2005, while its alumni received numerous prizes. These include the European Network on Cultural Management and policy—ENCATC—awards in 2012 and 2019. Those former students are now working for numerous international organisations, managing collaborative art projects or leading public institutions.

The **National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO** actively contributed to the organisation of the International Congress: “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development,” with the aim of placing culture at the centre of sustainable development policies. The event took place in May 2013 in Hangzhou, China and aimed to promote a specific culture-focused goal as part of the post-2015 UN development agenda (2030 SDGs). This was the first International Congress to specifically focus on the linkages between culture and sustainable development organised by UNESCO since the Stockholm Conference in 1998. The outcome document—“Hangzhou Declaration”—called for a new approach towards sustainable development and advocated for placing culture at the heart of public policy.⁷⁸ The congress played a crucial role in pushing for the full integration of culture into post-2015 development goals, and has been recognised as a milestone in the history of thinking about culture for sustainable development.

In March 2019, the **Burkina Faso National Commission for UNESCO**, together with UNESCO, helped organise the 26th edition of the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO). FESPACO, which started in 1969, is an internationally recognised

⁷⁸ Hangzhou Declaration, <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/images/FinalHangzhouDeclaration20130517.pdf>

festival that attracts enthusiasts from across the world to celebrate films largely produced in Africa by Africans.⁷⁹ The 2019 edition, which marked the Festival's 50th anniversary of existence, focused on equality and diversity in African cinema, including female representation in the film industry, where gender inequalities prevail. This initiative supports UNESCO's goals of promoting cultural diversity as well as gender equality. Female film directors Nadia El Fani (Tunisia), Jihan El-Tahri (Egypt), Monique Mbeka Phoba (DRC), Rahma Benahou El Madani (Algeria), and Sylvie Nwet (Cameroon) presented various recommendations at the Yennega Assembly, held in February 2019. These recommendations included: organising seminars on the history of women in African cinema, establishing quotas for women in film selections, setting criteria for funding African cinema that give priority to films in which women hold key creative positions. Sika Kaboré, the First Lady of Burkina Faso, said as she closed the roundtable: "Most cultural policies in Africa do not really take gender equality into account. It is time to commit to equality and diversity in African cinema." The event also saw a roundtable entitled: "50 years of FESPACO: 50-50 for women" as well as a public discussion on the 2018 Global Report Re|Shaping Cultural Policies.⁸⁰ The festival also hosted an Information and training session on the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD).

The 2021 edition, postponed due to the global pandemic, takes place between 16 and 23 October. UNESCO will launch the new publication entitled "The African Film Industry: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for Growth"⁸¹ during a high-level panel, at the 27th edition of the Festival.



Poster of the Hangzhou International Congress in China.

© City of Hangzhou, Design by Pascal Khom PROM.



Poster of the Assembly of Yennenga. © UNESCO



The Yennega Assembly: Photo of the directors with Ms Adjoavi Sika Kaboré, First Lady of Burkina Faso. © Nebie Denise

⁷⁹ Jewel Kiriungi, "Fespaco: Pomp and colour as Africa's biggest film festival starts," October 18, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58945414>

⁸⁰ <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/global-report-2018>

⁸¹ The African Film Industry - Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for Growth, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379165/PDF/379165eng.pdf.multi>



Ms Salimata Salembere, receiving the certificate of recognition from the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay.
© Nebie Denise



Panel Discussion at the 2007 European Conference on Cultural Diversity, Source: Knut Simon.
© German Commission for UNESCO

Germany attached very high significance to the “Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions”, long before its adoption by the General Conference. In 2004, Germany established a civil society “Coalition for Cultural Diversity” and ratified the convention in 2007, the same year it came into force. In 2007, the **German Commission for UNESCO** was given the role of national focal point for the convention. The commission organised the first international conference one month later, gathering 500 participants. One major outcome was the establishment of a “U40 network”, which connected more than 60 young experts from 34 countries around the world. Through annual workshops, the network supported their participation in multilateral cultural policy making. One of the commission’s latest initiatives was the 2021 publication of a landmark study in how to apply Fair Trade principles to cultural relations.

The Kenya National Commission for UNESCO has also continued to promote the protection of the diversity of cultural expressions in Kenya in line with the 2005 Convention. The commission created a partnership in 2018 with UNESCO to bring attention to the 1980 UNESCO recommendation on status of the artist. The event aimed to reach out to key members of Kenyan civil society organisations and public officials. The main goal was to improve governance and policies in promotion of culture and creative industries in Kenya along with protecting and advocating for artistic freedoms.

The Malian National Commission for UNESCO strongly recognises that culture and creativity are often avenues towards a better life. This was demonstrated by a project financed through the Participation Programme in Mali. In November 2020, 60 youth, displaced from schools in the North and Centre of Mali and now residing in Bamako, received a month’s training in photography design and braiding aesthetics. This practical training aimed to empower them to find jobs in these trades. The Malian National Commission actively contributed to this project.

The **Iranian National Commission for UNESCO**, aware that the Covid-19 pandemic closed art galleries, museums and concert halls, helped organise exhibitions online. This allowed the public to view high-quality works, watch the show opening live, and meet the artists on the gallery website. Two exhibitions were presented in the commission's hall, and the third was held in the Eco-Cultural Institute gallery. The fourth was an exhibition at Ferdowsi Mausoleum. The Iranian National Commission for UNESCO also invited music lovers and musicians to play music and perform for the medical personnel who were under a lot of strain due to Covid-19. The online event was dedicated to "Nurses: Love Healers."

The **Burkina Faso National Commission for UNESCO**, in close collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), supported an awareness campaign about the spread of Covid-19. The initiative was led by artists and cultural creators, and reinforced the awareness actions carried out by the state and civil society organisations. The campaign was supported by public and private media, social networks — the pages of the artists and ministries involved. UNESCO and the commission were keen to take stock of the pandemic's effects, to be able to offer guidance and support for Burkina Faso.

Despite the multiple challenges raised by the pandemic, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the full support of the **Saudi National Commission for Education, Culture and Science**, successfully hosted the G20 Summit. In addition, the Kingdom hosted the first meeting of the Ministers of Culture.



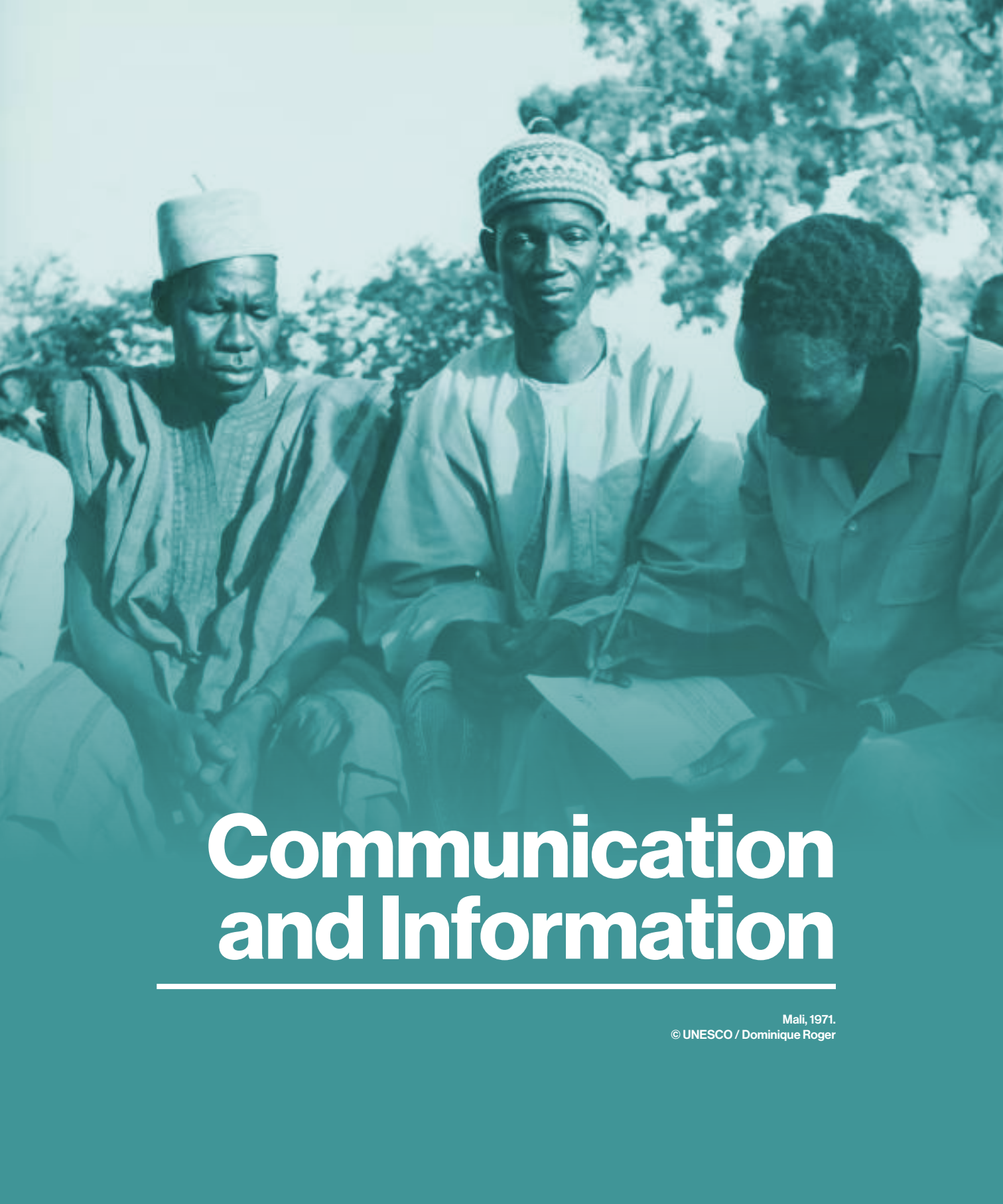
Workshop on the 1980 UNESCO Recommendation on Status of the Artist a partnership between UNESCO and Kenya National Commission for UNESCO.
© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO



Workshop in November 2020, Bamako.
© Malian National Commission for UNESCO



The three Burkinabe artists whose works were selected for this awareness campaign (right PAM de LUSTER, musician, middle Don Sharp de Batoro, lyricist, left Philomène Nanema, humorist). © Denise NEBIE



Communication and Information

Mali, 1971.
© UNESCO / Dominique Roger

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media.”⁸⁴

This proclamation attests to the power of ideas to change the world. UNESCO, through the mandate enshrined in its constitution to “promote the free flow of ideas by word and image”, brings key contributions to the field of communication and information. A crucial sector of UNESCO, it fosters freedom of expression, the human-focused use of digital technologies, as well as media development and access to information and knowledge.

“When people have access to information, they have access to opportunities. It ensures transparent governance, catalyses innovation, strengthens resilience and promotes learning.”

*Mr Tawfik Jelassi,
Assistant Director-General for Communication
and Information*

Two key intergovernmental programmes support UNESCO’s activity in this field: the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and the Information for All Programme (IFAP). IPDC is the only multilateral forum in the UN system designed to mobilise the international community to discuss and promote media development in developing countries. IFAP provides a platform for international discussions on policy and guidelines in the areas of access to information and knowledge.

UNESCO views the work of journalists as fundamental for freedom and expression. The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists points out that “without freedom of expression, and particularly freedom of the press, an informed, active and engaged citizenry is impossible”.⁸⁵ By taking a holistic approach, the organisation contributes to media diversity and pluralism by fostering diversity of content, audience, sources, and systems.

Preserving memory and enabling access to documentary heritage and archives is also one of UNESCO’s key projects. This led, in 1992, to the creation of the Memory of the World Programme. This is based on the idea that the world’s documentary heritage belongs to all, should be fully preserved, protected for all and be permanently accessible to all. This programme shows once more, in the words of Rollo May, how “communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing”.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, <https://en.unesco.org/un-plan-action-safety-journalists>

⁸⁶ Rollo May, *Power and Innocence: A Search for Sources*, 246.

⁸⁴ https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

Communication and Information Activities

In 1991, Namibia became a synonym for freedom of expression and independent media with the adoption of the landmark Windhoek Declaration⁸⁷. The Windhoek Declaration is a fundamental assertion of free press principles as put together by newspaper journalists in Africa during a UNESCO seminar on “Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press” in Windhoek, Namibia between 29 April and 3 May 1991. This historical action culminated in World Press Freedom Day as declared by the United Nations General Assembly on 3 May 1993 following a recommendation adopted at the 26th session of the UNESCO’s General Conference.

In May 2012, Namibia, with the support of the **Namibia National Commission for UNESCO**, hosted the 30th anniversary of the declaration,⁸⁸ through a special celebration of World Press Freedom Day, held appropriately in Windhoek. This led to a review of the 1991 Declaration to embrace new changes, trends and growth in the media landscape and to respond to the emerging needs of institutions, journalists and media practitioners worldwide. This resulted in the adoption of Windhoek+30 Declaration. The Windhoek+30 Declaration advances the spirit of the original 1991 Windhoek Declaration but refers to the persistent and rising challenges to media freedom. These include the risk of media extinction through “severe economic crisis” and the digital disruption of traditional media business models. The Windhoek Declaration drew attention to the “increasing proliferation, amplification and promotion of [...] disinformation and hate speech” as well as “enduring and new threats to the safety of journalists and the free exercise of journalism, including



Ms Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director General and Rt. Hon. Dr Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia at the Global Opening Ceremony, WPF 2021 in Windhoek. © MICT

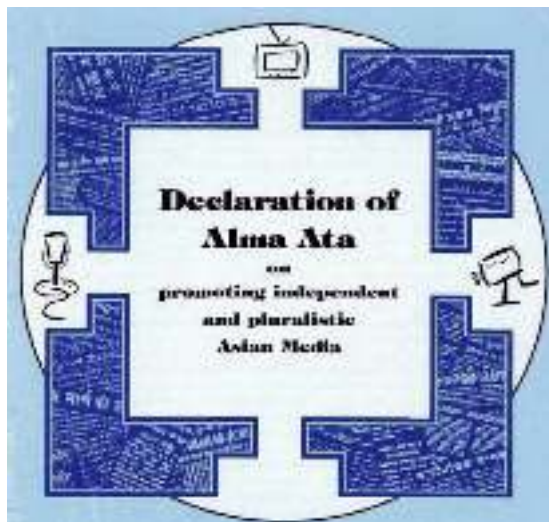
killings, harassment of women, offline and online attacks”. The declaration also contains recommendations to take effective steps to nurture a diversity of viable public, private and community media, while safeguarding their independence. Finally, advocates mainstreaming Media and Information Literacy, as well as working on ensuring transparency of technological companies.⁸⁹

Following the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration, in October 1992, the **Kazakhstan National Commission for UNESCO** organised in Almaty a seminar on supporting independent and pluralistic media. The seminar was the second in a series of five regional UN and UNESCO key workshops on the building of independent media (Windhoek, 1991, Almaty, 1992, Santiago, 1994; Sana, 1996; Sofia,

⁸⁷ Declaration of Windhoek, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201104/20110429ATT18422/20110429ATT18422EN.pdf>

⁸⁸ <https://en.unesco.org/news/30th-anniversary-windhoek-declaration>

⁸⁹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378158?posInSet=3&queryId=f7504e44-a2f7-4c69-b3d8-7a028fd89202>



Cover page of the Declaration of Alma Ata. © UNESCO/UN 1992



World Information Technology Forum. © WITFOR

1997). This seminar recognised that “free pluralistic and independent media is an essential element of any democratic society”. It concluded with the Adoption of the Declaration of Almaty on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Asian Media. The declaration is an indication of Kazakh society’s transformation and its desire for integration into the international community based on the new democratic norms and principles.⁹⁰ Continuing the work started in 1992, Kazakhstan has organised since 2002 the Eurasian Media Forum in Almaty, with a view to creating an open dialogue and supporting media’s development.

In August 2003, Vilnius hosted the World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR), which gathered 32 government delegations and almost 700 participants from 73 countries. The forum was organised by the Government of Lithuania and the **Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO**, together with the International Federation for Information Processing and International Telecommunication Union. Other partners included the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Vilnius city municipality, Lithuanian Computer Association (LIKS), association INFOBALT and Vilnius University. The forum aimed to create blueprints to assist the least developed, and developing countries, and to create strategies for information development, which would lessen the digital divide in IT and social spheres. The adoption of the Vilnius Declaration⁹¹ was one of the forum’s outcomes.

The **French National Commission for UNESCO** was instrumental in the emergence of the Addis Ababa Declaration for the Recognition of Press Cartoons as a Fundamental Right.⁹² It was proclaimed by an international collective of cartoonists on World Press Freedom Day in May 2019 in Addis Ababa with the support of the French Commission. Cartoonists

⁹⁰ Declaration of Alma Ata on Promoting independent and Pluralistic Asian Media, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/153827?ln=fr>

⁹¹ 2003 Vilnius Declaration, http://www.witfor.org/2003/witfor_vilnius_declaration.pdf

⁹² <https://dessindepressecomedroitfondamental.org/?lang=en>

from all countries can now rely on this international declaration to recognise press cartoons as one of the essential markers of freedom of expression. The French Commission has communicated the declaration to all other National Commissions to sustain this innovative initiative, which is supported by the “Cartooning for Peace” collective. In France, in partnership with “Cartooning for Peace” and the Bic company, the commission is organising debates between cartoonists and students on the right to satirise through press cartoons in Associated Schools.

As early as 1955, the **Turkish National Commission for UNESCO** supported the organisation’s projects in the fields of communication and information. The establishment of the Bibliography Institute of National Library of Turkey in 1955 was one of the most significant initiatives.

Following the celebration of the centenary of the birth of Pablo Picasso in 1981, UNESCO, in collaboration with Malaga City Council and the **Spanish National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO**, set up a documentation, research and information centre dedicated to the painter. The Picasso Birthplace Museum was created in 1988 as the Pablo Ruiz Picasso Foundation. The centre brings together a large volume of items on tributes, conferences, exhibitions, news and documentaries related to Picasso, but also on modern and contemporary art in general. This project is an example of international cooperation, highlighting the catalytic role undertaken by the Spanish National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, which was responsible for centralising and sending to the Malaga City Council all the information and documentation received from museum curators, documentation centres, the media, art book printers, the Picasso family, international organisations, and other National Commissions.

Starting from 2008, the **Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO** in cooperation with the Russian Information for All Programme Committee as well as UNESCO, initiated and hosted eight of



Illustration by Plantu offered to the French National Commission for UNESCO. © French National Commission for UNESCO

the 12 major international conferences in the cities of Yakutsk and Khanty-Mansiysk (Russian Federation) and at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. These addressed the issues of preserving languages of the peoples of the world and the development of multilingualism in cyberspace. These events were attended by 120 countries. The documents developed within the framework of these events represent a strong basis for the formation and implementation of international and national language policies as well as the development of international cooperation in this field.

In May 2017, the **Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO** organised, in partnership with IFAP, the UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut, and the Rotary Club of Beirut (1931), an international conference on “Youth and information and communication technologies: Towards the prevention of violent extremism in cyberspace”.⁹³ The conference brought together about 200 participants, researchers, experts in sociology and social media, civil society representatives as

⁹³ https://zh.unesco.org/sites/default/files/beirut_statement_en_0.pdf



Teams participating in the “Information for development” start-up tours within the framework of the “I2B - From Ideas to Business” project. © i2b.az



Category II Regional Centre for Information and Communication Technology.
© Bahrain National Commission for UNESCO



Philippines Social Science Council presented the project results during the Conference on Gender and the Media held on 30 April 2018.
© University of the Philippines – Open University

well as government and private sector institutions from 20 countries (France, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Egypt, the Netherlands, Sudan, Palestine, Syria, Iran, Russia, the United Kingdom, Ghana, Botswana, Grenada, Jordan, Morocco, Iraq, Oman, and Kuwait). The conference aimed to explore ways to prevent radicalisation online—leading to violent extremism, discrimination, and hatred on the Internet and social media. The conference resulted in the Beirut Call to Action, which supports the adoption and implementation of strategies and action plans to counter violent extremism in cyberspace, as well as the promotion of a free Internet, oriented towards peace, development, and intercultural dialogue.

Azerbaijan’s commitment to the promotion of communication and information was underlined by the establishment of the National IFAP in 2010. In June 2018, the committee proposed a 2019–2021 Action Plan for Azerbaijan. Endorsed by the **National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO**, the plan focused on implementing projects for startup development. Start-up tours were organised in 2019 as part of the “I2B—From Ideas to Business” project in Baku and 11 regions (Mingachevir, Sabirabad, Sumgait, Ganja, Goychay, Nakhchivan, Lankaran, Zagatala, Tovuz, Shamakhi and Sheki) of the country. The event was attended by more than 2,000 young people and 153 teams and 10 teams competed in the final round.

The **Bahrain National Commission for Education, Science and Culture** plays a significant role as an implementing partner for projects and activities in the field of communication and information. In 2012, Bahrain opened a Category II Regional Centre for Information and Communication Technology. The centre aims to promote innovation and scientific research, especially in the six member states of the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States and Yemen. The aim is to harness new information and communication technologies to assist the process of capacity-building and exchanging knowledge, experiences and good practices. More than 15,000 people have received training from the centre, at the national and regional levels, since its inauguration.

In the same vein, to further the establishment of pluralistic media, the **National Commission for UNESCO of the Republic of North Macedonia** supported the creation in 1998 of the Media Information Agency, with UNESCO's direct contribution.

It is now well-established that media has a decisive impact on how, and to what extent, gender equality—a UNESCO priority goal—is a lived reality. The portrayal of women through media is a particularly important issue. In this context, **UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines** supported and promoted in 2016–2017 a project entitled: “Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Sensitivity in Philippine Media” of the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC). The project featured various benchmarks aimed at assessing Philippine media organisations and companies in their implementation and adherence to existing legislation, policies, and independent guidelines to promote the fair and sensitive treatment of women and the LGBTQ in the workplace and media. The project's results were presented at a conference on Gender and Media held in April 2018. The findings have been critical for providing a baseline of information and reference points for future developments. The studies also provided practical recommendations to address gaps and to provide a code of ethics, and gender guidelines for schools, media organisations, and private companies. The publication has been utilised as a guide for the continuing education of media practitioners, representatives of media companies, self-regulatory media organisations, and professional unions.

Working with the **Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science**, the Assistive Technology Centre (Mada) received the 2020–2021 UNESCO/Emir Jaber Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah Prize for Digital Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.⁹⁴ The prize recognises outstanding contributions of individuals, institutions and non-governmental organisations that promote integration of



UNESCO/Emir Jaber Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah Prize for Digital Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.
© Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science



The 4th International Conference of the Memory of the World Programme on “Culture–Memory–Identities”, Warsaw, May 2011. © Filip Otmianowski

persons with disabilities through the effective and early application of digital solutions.

The **Polish National Commission for UNESCO** is strongly involved in the Memory of the World Programme, as it recognises the impact in the fields of documentary heritage preservation and accessibility. The commission has actively contributed to the organisation of several UNESCO events that strengthened the programme's profile—the first of these being the Meeting of the Memory of the World International Advisory Committee (IAC), held in Pułtusk, Poland, in 1993. Another key event was the 4th

94 <https://en.unesco.org/prizes/digital-empowerment>



Universalis Cosmographia, Waldseemüller's 1507 world map, by Martin Waldseemüller (c. 1470 – c. 1519) © Public domain



2018 UNESCO Memory of the World International Training Workshop.
© Korean National Commission for UNESCO



Sir William Arthur Lewis. © Santa Lucia National Commission for UNESCO

International Conference of the Memory of the World Programme held in Warsaw in 2011. This conference led to the elaboration and adoption, in 2015, of the Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form.⁹⁵ This was the first-ever legal instrument of global reach comprehensively addressing documentary heritage to encourage policies assuring its lasting accessibility for humankind.

In the same vein, the **German Commission for UNESCO** is also very invested in contributing to the Memory of the World Programme. In 1999 it established its own nomination committee —now a well-recognized German institution that evaluates and validates the nomination proposals to the international register. The German nomination committee encompasses experts from multiple disciplines as well as representatives of the federal and state governments. The committee has registered more than 25 new entries. An important feature of these listings, fully endorsed by the commission, is that more than half are internationally shared nominations. Wherever possible, the nomination committee of the German Commission has sought to promote and define internationally shared entries. In this way it seeks to avoid any exploitation of documents. It also underlines the fact that one of the main goals of the Memory of the World Register is to contribute to the building of a mutually shared history across nations.

The **Colombian National Commission Cooperation with UNESCO**, in collaboration with the **Korean National Commission for UNESCO**, organised Memory of the World International Training Workshops annually, starting from 2009. The workshop series aimed to help fellow member states in Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Arab region to identify their documentary heritage. It also aimed to show them how to nominate their heritage so it could be recognised and added to the Memory of

⁹⁵ https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/2015_mow_recommendation_implementation_guidelines_en.pdf



Doreen Harris, elder of Laverton from 'Margillee' video, exploring the interconnectedness of Indigenous Australians with the land.
© Martine Perret

the World International Register (MoW).⁹⁶ Following participation in the workshops over the last 12 years, 10 countries have successfully registered their documentary heritage on the International Register, and 11 countries on the Regional Registers. The workshops are an excellent example of fruitful cross-regional cooperation between UNESCO's National Commissions, helping to accomplish the mission, ideals, and values of the MoW Programme in particular, and UNESCO in general. This list of documentary local heritages is of universal value.

The **Saint Lucia National Commission for UNESCO** strongly endorses the Memory of the World Programme and contributed actively to adding to its listings. In 2009, Saint Lucia inscribed the Sir Arthur Lewis papers on the International Register for his landmark work in the field of economic development, and creation of the dual sector labour model, that won him the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. In 2010, another inscription was awarded to the Roderick Walcott collection for his work as a playwright and other literary achievements.

⁹⁶ <https://en.unesco.org/programme/mow>



Baltic Way 30th anniversary remembrance event, Riga, Latvia, August 23, 2019. © Alvis Dadzis/Shutterstock.com

The **Georgian National Commission for UNESCO** supported the country's participation in UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme. It led to the inclusion of five historic items of documentary heritage preserved at the National Archives of Georgia, between 2011 and 2015.

The **Australian National Commission for UNESCO** has significantly contributed to the establishment of the Australian Memory of the World programme. The commission aims to also increase awareness of documentary heritage, particularly among Australia's youth. The promotion of documentary heritage is actively supported by Australia's National Archives and the National Library.

The **Latvian National Commission for UNESCO** in cooperation with partners in Baltics has commemorated the Baltic Way, a peaceful political demonstration that took place on August 23, 1989. Approximately two million people joined their hands to form a human chain spanning 675.5km across the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which at the time were constituent republics of the former Soviet

Union. Following the revolutions of 1989, August 23 is known as Black Ribbon Day, officially known in the European Union as the "Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes."⁹⁷ The Baltic Way was not only an important historical milestone, but its legacy also lives on as a source of inspiration for civic participation and non-violent forms of resistance. The event, and its documentary evidence, are included in the Memory of the World International Register.

The commission supported a number of commemoration events, including the 2014 campaign that collected people's memories and received more than 800 stories from the Baltic States. The memories were collected and shared on the dedicated webpage. To mark the 30th anniversary of the Baltic Way, a Baltic Youth Forum entitled: "Going Further along the Baltic Way" was organised in 2019. Young participants were engaged in discussions on common values and challenges in the Baltic region today—human rights, environmental sustainability, and preservation of cultural heritage, with a focus on the UN SDGs.

The **Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO** advocated for the inscription of the March 7 Speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the Memory of the World International Register as the Documentary Heritage of Outstanding Universal Value. The inscription demonstrates the speech's inspirational potential for people around the world as it "calls for more inclusive and democratic societies in which the political, economic and cultural aspirations of all groups are fulfilled, and promotes the values of cultural diversity, tolerance and equality which are the cornerstone of UNESCO".⁹⁸

The **Sint Maarten National Commission for UNESCO** supported the country's first nomination for the Memory of the World International Register, which

⁹⁷ European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52009IP0213&from=EN>

⁹⁸ <https://events.unesco.org/event?id=3540045293&lang=1033>

was approved and inscribed in 2017. The inscription is entitled: “Route/Root to Freedom: A case study of how the enslaved Africans gained their freedom on the dual national island of Sint Maarten/Saint Martin”. The nomination outlines how the enslaved from the Diamond Estate in Sint Maarten walked/ran to freedom along a track across the international border between the two nations, Holland and France, within the island of Sint Maarten/Saint Martin. The inscription creates awareness of the significance of preserving documentary heritage and of lesser-known histories focusing on slavery and subjugation.

Radio is the mass media with the widest reach and audience in the world. This unique ability to reach out to the widest possible audience means that radio (and TV and now the Internet) can shape a society’s experience of diversity, stand as an arena for all voices to speak out and be represented and heard. Proclaimed in 2011 by the member states of UNESCO and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012 as an International Day, February 13 became World Radio Day (WRD)—⁹⁹the day on which the United Nations radio was established in 1946. UNESCO’s perspective is that radio stations should serve diverse communities, offering a wide variety of programmes, viewpoints and content, and reflect the diversity of audiences in their organisations and operations. WRD aims to raise awareness among the public and the media of the importance of radio, to encourage decision-makers to establish and provide access to information through radio, as well as to enhance networking and international cooperation among broadcasters.

The **Botswana National Commission for UNESCO**, in collaboration with the Media Institute of Southern Africa Botswana and a number of radio stations, celebrated WRD under the theme “Youth & Radio” in Gaborone Game City Mall.



Bangabandhu's Historic Speech at Race Course (now Sohrawardy Park) at Dhaka, 7 March 1971. © Liberation War Museum



Mr. Alfonso Blijden, Custodians of the Government Archives of Sint Maarten, Ms. Silveria Jacobs, Minister of Education, Culture Youth and Sport, and Ms. Marcellia Henry, Secretary-General of Sint Maarten National Commission for UNESCO, Memory of the World (MOW) International Register Certificate Presentation. © Department of Communication of the Government of Sint Maarten

Another important aspect of Botswana’s work in developing access to information and knowledge is represented by investment in large-scale projects to connect communities to optic fiber and mobile network infrastructure. Support for ICT in education has reduced the digital and economic divide between primary and secondary schools, and between remote and rural communities, to create opportunities for all.

Botswana’s interest in increasing transparency and accessibility led to a project for the digitisation of the National Archives and Records Services across

99 World Radio Day. <https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldradioday>



UNESCO World Radio Day celebration.
© Botswana National Commission for UNESCO



"Youth and Radio" commemoration during World Radio Day.
© Botswana National Commission for UNESCO

Government. The project enhances the coordination of all records management activities electronically and reduces paper-based records. This will increase security of information, monitoring of access and particularly timely access to information.

Working with UNESCO to promote freedom of expression and media pluralism at the community level, the **Ghana National Commission for UNESCO** launched an ongoing project in 1990, in support of community broadcasting. This led to the creation of new stations and community radios nationwide, such as Ada Community Radio, Bosomtwi Radio, Bimbilla Peace Media, Community Multimedia Centre for Ajumako Bisease, Winneba Radio Peace, Sogakope Community Multimedia Centre, Radio Univers. These stations broadcast in the local language and play a critical role

in increasing access to the media for everyone. The project has great potential in promoting democracy and governance, and bridging the information gap between rural and urban dwellers.

UNESCO through the **Eswatini National Commission for UNESCO** contributed to community radio establishment in Eswatini. Notably, in 2016, the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) was helped to establish the first-ever campus radio station in the country, enabling students to efficiently produce various programmes relating to education, culture, business, health, agriculture and environment. Another initiative implemented that same year focused on developing a distance-learning programme for Swati journalists.

The **Kenya National Commission for UNESCO**, in collaboration with UNITWIN/UNESCO Rongo University (UNESCO Chair for Community Radio), conducted a content development workshop for radio managers in community radios in Migori County. The aim was to mitigate fake information regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. The capacity-building workshop themed "A responsive and proactive media" set out to co-design radio adverts and podcasts with participation of key health and community radio stakeholders, with the overall goal of enhancing community awareness on causes and prevention measures for Covid-19. This can be seen as a blueprint initiative for other countries in fighting fake news and promote scientific-based research.

Since 1997, the **Uganda National Commission for UNESCO**, in close cooperation with UNESCO headquarters, has been involved in the establishment of Various Community Multimedia Centres (CMC's). The pilot project has aimed to stimulate rural development by facilitating communication and access to information and learning resources. This initiative has promoted community empowerment and has addressed, to a certain level, the digital divide in Uganda by combining community broadcasting with internet and related technologies. In addition, the community multimedia centres have offered access to knowledge by fostering participation.

The **Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO** contributed to the declaration of Global Media and Information Literacy Week as a key step towards building critical media literacy skills. The first celebration was in Fez, Morocco in 2011. The commission also supported the development of community radio stations throughout Jamaica. Radio provides an excellent platform for reaching out to different communities—the most recent addition being 88.7 FM Radio Abeng, the voice of the Maroons. Radio Abeng promotes the rich indigenous culture, history and heritage of the Trelawny Town Maroons, the people of Accompong and adjoining communities.

In October 2020, the **Korean National Commission for UNESCO** co-organised the 10th Global Media & Information Literacy Week with UNESCO. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the event was held online for the first time. Entitled: “Resisting Disinformation: Media Information Literacy for everyone, by everyone,” the event brought together global experts of diverse ages, expertise, and nationalities to explore ways to fight the increasing plague of dis- and misinformation facing humanity. The conference addressed how Media Information Literacy (MIL) could help in building healthy democracies, encouraging youth participation, and reducing inequality. The event also involved a Youth Media Information Literacy Hackathon, in which 144 young people from around the world submitted inspiring ideas on how to leverage MIL to tackle a variety of major issues, ranging from Covid-19 to discrimination. The event attracted more than 600 people from 82 countries and inspired nearly half a million reactions on social media. This experience has inspired a number of stakeholders to initiate talks for a domestic MIL Week in the Republic of Korea.

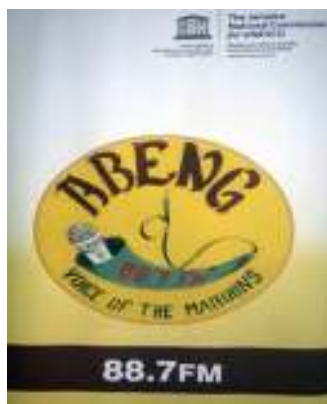
The work of the **Swedish National Commission for UNESCO** in the field of media and information literacy underscores the principles of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerning freedom of opinion and expression as well as UNESCO’s mission. The commission aims to build on the organisation’s experience and knowledge to spearhead new policy



Participants discuss during an advert scripting session.
© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO



Alex Byaruhanga and Susan Mariam Presenters of Youth Empowerment (Eddoboozi Lyomuvubuka) radio programme every Saturday at Nakaseke Community Multimedia Centre. © Uganda National Commission for UNESCO



Radio Abeng promotes the rich indigenous culture, history and heritage of the Trelawny Town Maroons, the people of Accompong and adjoining communities.
© Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO



Virtual Conference Hall for 2020 Global Media & Information Literacy (MIL) Week. © Korean National Commission for UNESCO

Young people must be given the skills to interpret and contextualise information they find online.

© Swedish National Commission for UNESCO



initiatives nationally. One of the resulting projects was initiated by Nordicom, a Nordic knowledge centre in media and communication at the University of Gothenburg. The initiative, which started in 2011, gathered representatives of civil society, academia and government agencies. It produced among other things, a translation of UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy: Curriculum for Teachers. The book, adapted to a Swedish audience, was eventually published, and distributed to all stakeholders. Following these joint projects, the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO gradually became a platform for discussions on Media and Information Literacy.

Between 2013 and 2015, the **Curaçao National Commission for UNESCO**, together with the IPDC designed a comprehensive set of Media Development Indicators (MDIs) aimed at enabling the assessment

of media landscapes at the national level. The Media Development Indicators define a framework, within which the media can best contribute to, and benefit from, good governance and democratic development. The MDIs study aimed to understand the status of media development in Curaçao and identify gaps in terms of policy and capacity-building. The study provided some concrete proposals for policy interventions. Starting from 2013, in an effort to strengthen media in Curaçao, the Government of Curaçao, Curaçao Media Organisation, University of Curaçao, Caribbean Broadcasting Union the national TV Station TeleCuraçao and Civil Societies organisations, implemented a series of projects based on the results of the MDIs Study. These include the celebration of World Press Freedom Day in 2013, several training programmes for journalists, a 2018 IPDC Project on capacity-building for journalists to improve coverage of the SDGs in the media, and finally in 2019 a two-day workshop on Use and Misuse of Social Media.

The **National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO**, working closely with the Chinese Ministry of Education, the Chinese National Language Commission, and the People's Government of Hunan Province organised in September 2018 an international conference focused on the "Role of linguistic diversity in building a global community with shared future." The event contributed to the organisation of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages and the development of UNESCO's World Atlas of Languages. The conference then adopted Yuelu Proclamation¹⁰⁰ on the protection and promotion of language diversity of the world. The proclamation provided guidance and recommendations on language resources protection, and promoted the inclusion of language diversity protection as one of the sustainable development objectives of UNESCO member states.

The promotion of Indigenous Languages is a central preoccupation for the **Canadian Commission for UNESCO**, which actively supported the UNESCO-led

¹⁰⁰ Protection and Promotion of Linguistic Diversity of the World - Yuelu Proclamation, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/yuelu_proclamation_en.pdf

International Year for Indigenous Languages in 2019. The commission contributed to an international conference entitled *HELISSET TFE SKÁL* (“Let the Languages Live”) organised by the First Peoples’ Cultural Council in British Columbia to bring together learners and language keepers from across the globe. It also supported the Nikanite First Nations Centre colloquium and published its key conclusions.

Furthermore, the Commission actively supported a symposium on Indigenous languages organised by the Wapikoni people and RICAA (International Network for Indigenous Audiovisual Creation). The event provided a space to reflect on the role of film and media arts in the promotion, preservation, and revitalisation of languages. The Canadian Commission also endorsed inscriptions in the Memory of the World Register with a focus on Indigenous languages, including the archives of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, the Ida Halpern Fonds of the Royal BC Museum, and the early books in Indigenous languages (1556–1900) that have been preserved at the National Library and Archives of Quebec.

The **United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO** spearheaded an important initiative showcasing the key role of National Commissions for the organisation.¹⁰¹ In 2021, in collaboration with UNESCO Archives Unit, the UK National Archives and the French Delegation and National Commission, the commission endorsed and actively participated in the digitisation of UNESCO member states’ original membership documents (Instrument of Acceptance to UNESCO’s Constitution) which were held in original paper format in the UNESCO Archives.¹⁰² A key outcome of this successful project is the free access of all UNESCO member states and National Commissions, as well as members of the public, to these documents.



Opening of Caribbean Media Summit on World Press Freedom Day with Caribbean Journalists, International Press Institute, Cluster Office for the Caribbean, Curaçao NatCom Minister of Education, Science, Culture & Sports, Curaçao Media Organisations and guests.
© Curaçao National Commission for UNESCO



International Conference “Role of linguistic diversity in building a global community with shared future”.
© Chinese Ministry of Cultural and Tourism/Li Changhong



Ratification document.
© UK National Commission for UNESCO

¹⁰¹ An Act for Peace initiative, <https://digital.archives.unesco.org/fr/webexposition-fr/detail/ebf0ecf8-fc79-4fd5-a5f8-cdc3113832b0>

¹⁰² UNESCO Ratification Instruments, <https://atom.archives.unesco.org/member-state-ratifications>



Social and Human Sciences

2nd place International Poster Competition.
Design submitted by the polish National Commission.
Artist: Stanislaw Zagoraki, 1962.
© UNESCO Archives

Linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky once said: “It is no easy task to gain some understanding of human affairs. In some respects, the task is harder than in the natural sciences. Mother nature doesn’t provide the answers on a silver platter, but at least she does not go out of her way to set up barriers to understanding. In human affairs, such barriers are the norm.”¹⁰³ Since its foundation, UNESCO has aimed to bring down the barriers that prevented people from understanding each other. In an increasingly diverse world, UNESCO works to enable people to create and use knowledge to promote just and inclusive societies.

“Intelligence may change the world we live in, but it is the ethics behind it that will determine what the world will look like.”

*Ms Gabriela Ramos,
Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences*

This is not an easy task, as a globalised, dynamic world, which thrives on instant interconnectivity, raises challenges that need to be addressed locally but which often have a global impact. There is no single answer to the rapid social and cultural changes happening at the moment, and UNESCO strives to support its member states in finding the best possible solutions that fulfill its mission of building lasting peace.

Some of the key initiatives in this regard are the Intergovernmental Programme for Management of Social Transformations (MOST), the Youth Programme and the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence Programme, which include, *inter alia*, initiatives for democracy and global citizenship, intercultural dialogue, and direct peacebuilding. Furthermore, UNESCO seeks to promote the development and the practice of sporting activities, as well as the fight against doping to foster social integration in different cultural and political contexts, recognising that sport often transcends both geographical borders and social classes.

UNESCO has more than 50 years of experience in promoting international reflection on the ethics of life sciences. Since the 1970s, the organisation has led debates on bioethics, as well as on ethical principles in relation to climate change, the most salient issue today. More recently, UNESCO’s International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) have called for a change of course in current Covid-19 vaccination strategies, urging that vaccines be treated as a global public good to ensure they are made equitably available in all countries.

The key issue of ethics in science and technology has a higher resonance as debates around the uses and impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in society gain momentum. UNESCO is involved in addressing the impact of AI in its fields of competence, by promoting the use of AI and its potential to achieve the SDGs. It also supports a human-centred development and application of AI, respectful of human rights and ethical principles.

¹⁰³ Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (2006).

While important advancements have been made in many areas, many societies are still plagued by discrimination, racism, and inequalities. None of the multifaceted and complex challenges of our times can be tackled effectively without inclusion or international cooperation. The examples used above demonstrate how effective multilateral coordination is for various UNESCO programmes. This is the resounding message of Agenda 2030 and its pledge to “Leave no one behind”. To transform that vision into reality in a multicultural world, action must be anchored in human rights and gender equality, and promote openness, empathy, and other shared values.

Moreover, drawing on more than 25 years of expertise in breaking the silence on the slave trade and slavery, UNESCO continues to highlight the links between the history of the slave route and the modern expressions of prejudice, racism, and discrimination. UNESCO also emphasises the contributions of enslaved people to “receiving” societies through the identification, preservation and promotion of sites and itineraries of memory.

Social and Human Sciences in the Work of National Commissions

One very important area of UNESCO’s work in social and human sciences is to promote intercultural dialogue. UNESCO often represented an initial step towards international cooperation, helping different countries in finding a common ground, across different ideologies. An

international colloquium, entitled Balkan and South-East European Civilisations, organised by the **Romanian National Commission for UNESCO** in 1962, led to the founding of the International Association of South-East European Studies (AIESEE). The association



Meeting during the establishment of the International Association of South-East European Studies (AIESEE), Bucharest, 23 April 1963.
© AIESEE



4th International Forum on Historical Reconciliation (2015).
© Korean National Commission for UNESCO



UNESCO's Peace Games, 1996. © Togolese National Commission for UNESCO

was established in Bucharest in April 1963, with the moral and financial support of UNESCO. The aim of this international non-governmental organisation is to promote the study of the civilisations of the Balkan and South-Eastern European space, their relations with the other civilisations of the world, and their contribution to the universal cultural heritage. Its members are the national committees of Southeast European studies, constituted in more than 25 countries. To implement its programmes, AIESEE has organised more than 80 scientific meetings and 12 international congresses, the last of which took place in Bucharest in 2019.

The **Italian National Commission** for UNESCO organised in December 1992 the first Italian-Arab Seminar linked to the Mediterranean Project. This initiative aimed to foster knowledge among peoples, intercultural dialogue and fighting racism, at a time when immigration began to become a controversial issue. This led to a project of Italian-Arab Seminars, which gained the support of the National Commission of Morocco, and later of all National Commissions of the Mediterranean. This can be considered an example of good practices in interregional cooperation of National Commissions, as they gathered to support an initiative that benefitted everyone, furthering UNESCO's mission.

The **Korean National Commission** for UNESCO worked towards a shared understanding of East Asia's history for many years, beginning with the "International Forum on History Textbooks in the 21st Century," organised jointly with the German Commission for UNESCO in 1997. From 2007-2011, the Korean National Commission supported the organisation of an annual expert forum entitled the "International Forum on Historical Reconciliation in East Asia". The event gathered historians from China, Japan, Viet Nam, Thailand, and the Republic of Korea. The commission also worked with the Thai and Vietnamese National Commissions for UNESCO to expand participation to Southeast Asian countries. Between 2012-2016, the commission organised an annual "International Youth Forum on Historical Reconciliation" to contribute to peacebuilding in East Asia by facilitating youth engagement on historical reconciliation. The forum provided an opportunity for youth from the region to reflect on history, and better understand each other by discussing ways to overcome nationalistic or state-centric views of history. The forum also understates the important roles that youth can play in their countries' cooperation and positive interactions by discussing common histories. These projects and initiatives highlight the commissions' key role in building regional bridges of dialogue by working together towards UNESCO's peacebuilding mission.

Working along the same lines, in 1995 the **Turkish National Commission for UNESCO** contributed to the organisation of the International Symposium for the Regional Meetings on Tolerance in Istanbul.

In 1996, the **Togolese National Commissions for UNESCO** endorsed UNESCO's work for a Culture of Peace. In this context, the commission organised the international final of the UNESCO Peace Games.¹⁰⁴ The event was held in Lomé, Togo, and brought together 140 high-school students, aged between 10-18, from Benin, Costa Rica, Morocco, Romania, and Togo. The young people competed in the categories of choral singing and relay race, a unique combination of events. The National Commission has since used this opportunity to further UNESCO's projects and programmes to Associated Schools in the country.

The Great Millennium Peace Ride, an initiative started by the Lithuanian NGO Great Millennium Peace Ride Fund and implemented under the patronage and sponsorship of UNESCO, started in Seattle (USA) on Hiroshima Memorial Day on August 6, 1998. An international group of cyclists rode through 45 countries and reached their destination on the first day of the year 2000 in Hiroshima (Japan). More than 700 people from 185 countries took part in this project. The Peace Scroll—a forty-metre log white scroll symbolising the distance around the globe reduced million times—carried by the peace riders holds hundreds of signatures in support of the rider's mission. In 1999, the peace riders were welcomed at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, with the support of the **Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO**. The meeting was followed by a photo exhibition and the documentary entitled: *Don Quixotes on Wheels*, showing the story of Peace Ride and their encounters with people around the world.



The Great Millennium Peace Ride. © Sigita Kučas



Bridges of Tales. © Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO

¹⁰⁴ UNESCO Peace Games, <https://atom.archives.unesco.org/unesco-peace-games>.



H.E. Mr Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania,
and H.E. Mr Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO.
© Džoja Gunda Barysaitė, Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO did something similar to promote language and culture, but across regions in the name of peace. It contributed to a multi-national project to promote dialogue among civilisations. The event that took place in Vilnius in June 2003 aimed to encourage peaceful dialogue among the South Caucasus nations. It also supported cooperation between the South Caucasus and the Baltic States. Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian culture management specialists and culture administration representatives participated in roundtables held at Vilnius Academy of Arts. Writers, publishers, and translators from the different countries had meetings at the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO and National Martynas Mažvydas Library. The initiative included three exhibitions, cinema nights and publications of modern writers from South Caucasus in the Lithuanian monthly magazine, *Kultūros barai*. The participating delegations adopted recommendations to improve cooperation in the fields of culture, arts and human rights. As a follow-up, another project called *Bridges of Tales* was created, to promote stronger cooperation among the Baltic States and the South Caucasus in the field of literary translations. A direct outcome of this initiative was the publication in seven languages of a series of books of the most characteristic fairy tales (one per each country) illustrated by children from UNESCO ASPnet schools.



Inaugural Ceremonies of the Conferences.
© Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO

Two years earlier, in 2001, in the context of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilisations (1998), the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO also contributed to the organisation of an International Conference in Vilnius. The event brought together high-level UNESCO representatives as well as heads of states from the region and from India, Iran, France, Honduras, Lithuania, Mexico, Senegal, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and the USA. The participants elaborated a final document from the conference, the Vilnius Declaration, which emphasized the importance of tolerance, dialogue, human creativity, and freedom. After the conference, Lithuania welcomed representatives of 27 countries at the World Youth Festival.

A more recent initiative, proposed by the **Kazakhstan National Commission for UNESCO**, led to the declaration of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures in 2013-2022 (Resolution 67/104 adopted in December 2012) by the UN General Assembly.¹⁰⁵ This draws on a decision of the UNESCO General Conference and the experience of the 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, which was co-sponsored by Kazakhstan, under UNESCO's leadership. In 2015, as part of the International Decade, a proposal was launched for the establishment of an International Centre for the Rapprochement of Cultures. In this regard, the 39th General Conference of the Organisation in November 2017 approved the creation of a Category 2 Centre on Almaty, with support from the Kazakhstan National Commission for UNESCO. The centre aims to promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, as well as interreligious and intercultural dialogue through the development of knowledge culture.

The **Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO** also contributes to the organisation's work in the field of social and human sciences. One important initiative took place in 2009 and 2010, through the support for First and Second International Conference on Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue. Almost 200 people from 23 countries participated in these conferences, which focused on how intercultural dialogue, religious and cultural diversity support peace processes.

To promote intercultural dialogue, the **National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO** contributed to the initiation of the Baku Process in 2008.¹⁰⁶ The World Forums on Intercultural Dialogue, within the Baku Process, have been held every two years since 2011. By bringing together a number of high-level delegates as well as cultural professionals, journalists, prominent intellectuals and activists, these forums seek to contribute to the building of diversity,



Opening ceremony of the First World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue.
© azertag.az



Family photo after the opening of the symposium.
© Côte d'Ivoire National Commission for UNESCO

dialogue and mutual understanding. The 2019 edition of the World Forum had a special meeting on “The role of National Commissions for UNESCO in promoting intercultural dialogue”.

In 1994 the **Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO** was instrumental in its support for the creation of MOST¹⁰⁷ within UNESCO. The programme has three main objectives: the use of social and human science knowledge to support policies and build capacities, the transmission of knowledge through research-action activities, and contribution to

¹⁰⁵ <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/RES/67/104>

¹⁰⁶ <https://bakuprocess.az/baku-process/about-process/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/social-transformations/most>



Mentorship Exchange between Sitting MPs & LCs, Freetown, 2019.
© Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO



Vadzim in his room in Belarus. © Swedish National Commission for UNESCO



A situation analysis report, national implementation strategy and a copy of National Action Plan for Formal Human Rights Education in Uganda.
© Uganda National Commission for UNESCO

national and international policy debates and agendas. The Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) is the nodal agency of UNESCO-MOST and supports its initiatives for building efficient bridges between research, policy and practice.

Migration, as a key aspect of all societies, is part of UNESCO's work in social and human sciences. In March 2019, the **Côte d'Ivoire National Commission for UNESCO** supported the organisation of a forum on international migration, entitled: "Irregular migration from West Africa to Europe: what challenges for Economic Community of West African States countries?" The event sought to contribute to the debate on the complex issue of migration and aimed at identifying common solutions.

By contributing to UNESCO's work in social and human sciences, the **Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO** focused in 2019 on creating a workshop that brought sitting members of parliament and local councilors together to discuss their roles, and the limits of such roles. The direct outcome of this day of discussions is that they can now work better together.

In 2001, the **Swedish National Commission for UNESCO** launched a large-scale, nationwide initiative to increase young people's knowledge of human rights, and to ensure that human rights issues featured prominently in the public debate. A book entitled "Space", written by twenty young writers, was at the centre of this initiative. The book describes the lives of young people all over the world through images of their rooms and the spaces where they live. This was then used as a starting point for a discussion about human rights. The book was distributed to 125,000 high school students all over Sweden and was used as a teaching material for human rights. It was also showcased at Sweden's biggest book fair. The commission also held workshops on human rights with children in schools across Sweden. A workshop was even held at the national scout jamboree where 26,000 young people had gathered. The commission also curated an art exhibition at a Swedish museum on the same theme. The initiative



Copies of the Peace Education Reference Materials.
© Uganda National Commission for UNESCO



played a large role in including younger generations in the conversation about human rights, as well as bringing an overall change of perspective on youth engagement.

The **Uganda National Commission for UNESCO**, working together with UNESCO, has supported the integration of Human Rights and Peace Education into Uganda's Education System since 2005. As a result, Human Rights Day is observed annually. Learning environments now promote human rights-based approaches and participatory inclusive teaching methods that foster universal values, equal opportunities, and respect for diversity. The commission also prepared reference materials for Peace Education and establishment of Peace Clubs in Uganda.

In 2009, the **German Commission for UNESCO** established *kulturweit*,¹⁰⁸ its very ambitious



Volunteer Linus (Lüring) working at the National Commission for UNESCO of Rwanda, in February 2010 in Kigali.
© German Commission for UNESCO

international youth volunteering programme. Through *kulturweit*, some 500 young Germans per year, aged between 18–26, have the opportunity to work and live in countries of the Global South, in its educational and cultural institutions. Their six-month or 12-month service allows them to gain a better perception, and sense, of their global responsibility, as a contribution to an open-minded society in line with UNESCO goals. Participation in *kulturweit* initiates learning processes that reach far beyond the volunteering itself. Many volunteers work in National Commissions abroad. The commission offers many opportunities for alumni of *kulturweit*, such as further education regarding seminar concepts, World Heritage and Education for Sustainable Development. *Kulturweit* has been an exemplary driver for the commission to reorient and restructure its forms of youth engagement. In addition to working in educational and cultural institutions, volunteers have also worked in Biosphere Reserves, Global Geoparks or natural World Heritage sites of

108 <https://www.kulturweit.de/>



Artistic workshop led by Joseph Honein.
© Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO



Cultural diversity. Photo from Liga Rude.
© Latvian National Commission for UNESCO



Extensive discussions with the young participants at a conference for the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Belgium, 2019.
© Louison Jacoby

the Global South since 2019. For the past several years, through *kulturweit*, young female volunteers from selected Arab countries have also worked in Germany. In 2021, the next chapter of *kulturweit* was opened. Through “tandems” of African and German volunteers, *kulturweit* will try to contribute to overcoming the history of colonialism and racial discrimination. *Kulturweit* provides a communicative and experiential conduit between the Global North and Global South.

Gathering students to promote dialogue, and an awareness of the value of heritage, was key for the **Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO** and the Regional Office of UNESCO in Beit El Fann-El Mina. In 2013, students from three public high schools participated in roundtables and artistic workshops led by the painter Joseph Honein and the actor and director Gabriel Yammine. The workshops ended with an art exhibition entitled: “You and me, us,” and a play “Youth Stories,” which describes their experience of living in difficult circumstances amid violence and social insecurity. This play was presented by the students at the Safadi Cultural Centre Theater in Tripoli. This pilot project succeeded in bringing together secondary school students from two different religious regions during a period of intermittent armed conflict.

In 2017, the **Latvian National Commission for UNESCO**, in cooperation with local and regional institutions, carried out a project entitled: “Cultural Diversity as Means for Youth Empowerment and Promotion of Multilingualism and Intercultural Dialogue”. The project aimed to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue by highlighting the role of youth, and encouraging them to get involved. The project also aimed to provide young translators with the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills, as well as to learn about the specifics of their profession, and gain valuable professional and academic contacts. The participants were studying Latvian language and culture in foreign universities (Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Poland, and Finland) as well as Latvian students learning other foreign languages. The key event, that completed the project, was a



One of the entrances of the World Heritage Site of the Concentration Camp of Tarrafal, Santiago Island, Cabo Verde.
© Salvador Aznar/Shutterstock.com

conference and summer school in Latvia, in which the participants participated in lectures and workshops led by professional translators and industry experts.

The Belgian French-speaking and German-speaking Commission for UNESCO remains committed to developing preventive policies aimed at youth and the education for responsible citizenship. The goal is to encourage critical thinking, curiosity and questioning as well as education for the prevention of violent extremism. In this context, a series of three forums was launched with the title: “Identities, cultures and violence”. These events encouraged an open debate between political leaders, institutional representatives, field actors and young people. It should be emphasized that these dialogues are held within the various Belgian parliamentary bodies in a desire for democratic ownership.

In 2019, the Belgian French-speaking and German-speaking Commission for UNESCO celebrated the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)¹⁰⁹ through two events in which young participants were asked to contribute directly. One of them was an interactive exhibition entitled: “Selfie your rights!” and the second was a morning of debates on: “The drivers of emancipation in childhood: education, culture and participation.” The participants focused on how access to inclusive education is a key factor in motivating students to remain in school.

¹⁰⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>



Participants during the 2015 Meeting of the International Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Route Project.
© Cape Verdean National Commission for UNESCO

The **Ghana National Commission for UNESCO**, together with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture and UNESCO Cluster Office in Accra, marked the commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the North Atlantic Slave Trade in 2004. In November 2006, the 61st Session of UN General Assembly designated 25 March 2007 as the International Day for the Commemoration of the Two-hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.¹¹⁰

The **Cape Verdean National Commission for UNESCO** supported the organisation, together with UNESCO, of the 2015 Meeting of the International Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Route Project. UNESCO's Slave Route project: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage has broken the silence surrounding the slave trade and slavery that have concerned all continents and caused the great upheavals that have shaped our modern societies.¹¹¹ The commission also contributed to the organisation of visits to the World Heritage

Site "Cidade Velha" and to the site of the former Concentration Camp of Tarrafal. During the same event, the commission, with the support of the National Library, facilitated the opening of an exhibition of books on the theme of Slavery and the Slave Route, as well as of an exhibition of national handicrafts.

Guided by the Operational Strategy for Youth, the Cape Verdean National Commission for UNESCO with funding from the UNESCO Participation Programme and in partnership with various national institutions such as the Institute of Youth, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and the Joint Office UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF, organised the first edition of the Sustainable Development Goals Camp. The event was part of the celebrations of the "International Youth Day" in Ribeira Brava, the Cape Verdean Youth Capital 2021. The activities took place in the natural park of Monte Gordo and brought together 35 young people between 16-20 years from various parts of the island of São Nicolau. The camp's main objective was to raise awareness, and promote better understanding, of the SDGs by including youth in decision-making as global citizens capable of local action.

The Cape Verdean National Commission for UNESCO also supported in 2018 the Implementation of National Social Communication Policies, which focused on journalist training and improvement of social communication policies.

The **Canadian Commission for UNESCO** also pledged its support for the UNESCO Slave Route project. One of the initiatives was the production of an online resource that sets out a short history of slavery in Canada, with the participation of the Canadian hip-hop artist and historian Webster and illustrator Dimani Mathieu.

¹¹⁰ Commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 61st Session 2006-2007. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/587501?ln=en>

¹¹¹ <https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-rights-inclusion/slave-route>

Canada is a dynamic member of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities ICCAR.¹¹² Since its inception, ICCAR has become an active global front against racism and discrimination with more than 500 members across the globe. The coalition advocates for global solidarity and collaboration to promote inclusive urban development, free from all forms of discrimination. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO has supported the Coalition through coordinating its Advisory Committee and producing several important resources such as LGBTQ2+ Inclusiveness, Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and A Holistic Approach and Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees to Canada: The Role of Municipalities. The commission has also created an updated toolkit for coalition member municipalities. This resource provides both current and candidate members with information that meets their needs and reflects today's realities. The Canadian experience should inform other municipalities around the world.

The recent Chair of the Canadian National Commission Youth Advisory Group worked with young people from several other countries to develop a new toolkit for UNESCO's National Commissions, aimed at increasing youth engagement. As a model of cross-national cooperation, it was co-published with the **Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO** in 2020. This document shares models, best practices, and examples of initiatives by various National Commissions to increase youth engagement. The toolkit addresses several key factors such as the barriers that prevent youth and other marginalised communities from participating. It also proposes the “mainstreaming” of youth involvement to provide them with active roles in all National Commission activities. Finally, it proposes investment in developing the leadership potential and skills of youth.

The **National Commission of Benin for UNESCO**, together with the Beninese Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations (FBACU), implemented a project



Participants of International Youth Forum on Creativity and Heritage along the Silk Roads, held annually since 2017.

© Media Art Centre of Changsha/ Huang Qiqing



Participants at the International Conference on AI and the Futures of Education, Beijing, May 2019.

© National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO

¹¹² <https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-rights-inclusion/iccar>



Opening page of Public Consultation on Artificial Intelligence and Transhumanism. © French National Commission for UNESCO

on “Prevention of violent extremism in border areas”. The initiative was supported through the Participation Programme (2020–2021). The Regional Coordinators of UNESCO Clubs have been mobilised by the Federal Office and National Commission of Benin for UNESCO to carry out a number of activities. A key one focused on training and sensitisation of youth, hunters, and women on the fight against violent extremism. The targeted communities were also shown a film entitled: *“Et si on se donnait la main,”* which aimed to raise awareness of the harmful consequences of violent extremism.

The **National Commission of the People’s Republic of China for UNESCO** endorsed the organisation’s work in the field of social and human sciences through the establishment of annual events focused on youth and creativity. Starting from 2017, the commission initiated the “International Youth Forum on Creativity and Heritage along the Silk Roads”. The forum became a platform for exchange among young people living in countries along the Silk Roads, encouraging them to get involved in creative industries and understand the Belt and Road Initiative. The third forum, held in April 2019, led to UNESCO publishing the “Changsha Initiative”. This aims to provide youth with “the opportunity to learn from one another in the spirit of intercultural dialogue and a celebration of cultural diversity to engage, to explore the capacity of culture, innovation, and the creative

industries, to achieve sustainable development through the safeguarding of cultural heritage and social integration”.¹¹³

Rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) capacities has led to a new initiative connecting AI and education. In 2019, UNESCO and the National Commission of the People’s Republic of China for UNESCO, together with the Chinese Ministry of Education launched an annual meeting focused on AI and the Futures of Education in Beijing. *The Beijing Consensus*, adopted in 2019, was the first consensus adopted by UNESCO that aims to guide and shape the future development of AI within education. The 2020 edition, which took place online, focused on education after the Covid-19 pandemic.¹¹⁴

The latest developments in AI clearly show that the scientific progress behind its development needs to be accompanied by ethical considerations. In this context, the **French National Commission for UNESCO** organised in 2016 the first world congress on complex thought, under the high patronage of the President of the Republic. Chaired by Edgar Morin, the event aimed to bring together all those committed to developing awareness of the vital and global problems facing humanity. In this iteration, the French Commission and the Mutuelle Générale de l’Education Nationale

¹¹³ <https://en.unesco.org/news/changsha-initiative-adopted-3rd-international-youth-forum-china>

¹¹⁴ <https://iite.unesco.org/events/international-forum-on-ai-and-futures-of-education-2020-organized-by-unesco-and-china/>



Cover page of the Charter of Ethical Principles for Scientific Research in Lebanon.
© Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO



Response of the Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science fighting against Covid-19, helping the country's health sector.
© Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science

jointly conducted future-oriented work on the potential impact of data, AI and transhumanism (i.e., a cultural and intellectual movement advocating the improvement of human capabilities through science and technology). The study conducted 39 expert hearings as well as national public consultations, which collected more than 602 contributions between 2019-2020. The outcomes of this study were proposed as a significant contribution to guide the future formulation of legislation, policies and other instruments related to AI and algorithms that would guide human decision-making. This comes in the context of UNESCO's work in developing the preliminary draft recommendations on the ethics of artificial intelligence.

A similar initiative was pursued by the **Algerian National Commission for Education, Science and Culture**, which in December 2019 held at its headquarters a meeting focused on the ethics of AI. The meeting was a starting point for an in-depth debate concerning AI, which culminated with the development of a national strategy for research and innovation on AI 2020-2030.

AI used for medical diagnostics, data banks and care strategies became a focus for the **Belgian French-speaking and German-speaking Commission for UNESCO**. In 2019, the commission helped organise an event entitled: "Elementary, Doctor Turing! Artificial Intelligence and Medicine," in Charleroi. The participants had the opportunity to take part in a debate on AI and medical decisions, as well as the changes in the "duty of care", and responsibility, once algorithms and not people lead the way.

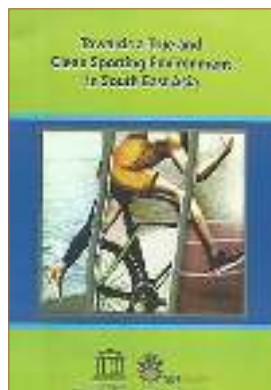
In 2014-2015, the **Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO**, in close collaboration with the National Council for Scientific Research (NCSR-L), have developed the Charter of Ethical Principles for Scientific Research in Lebanon.¹¹⁵ Lebanese scientific and academic institutions agreed to adopt this charter, and to use it as a guide for responsible scientific research.

The **Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO** highlights UNESCO's work in sport and gender equity.

¹¹⁵ Charter of ethics and guiding principles of scientific research in Lebanon
http://www.cnrs.edu.lb/Library/Files/Uploaded%20Files/Charter_of_Ethics_En.pdf



Participants swear nope to dope during the launch of the PSC's National Anti-Doping Awareness and Commitment Campaign, in partnership with UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines.
© UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines



Commitment Campaign of the Philippines Sports Commission, in partnership with UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines.
© UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines

A triple Olympic Gold Medalist, Veronica Campbell-Brown was appointed UNESCO Champion for Sport in October 2009. In May 2011, she launched a foundation in support of women education and a mentorship programme, which aligns with UNESCO's gender equality initiatives.

The **Georgian National Commission for UNESCO** also contributes to the implementation of the International Convention against Doping in Sport.¹¹⁶ In 2011, Georgia established an educational project entitled: "Anti-doping education, prevention and information programme in Georgia." The project's main goal was to raise awareness about doping and its impact on health. It highlighted methods used in the fight against doping among athletes, coaches, medical personnel, and sports professionals in general. One of the outcomes of the educational initiative was the creation of legal and normative principles for the convention's implementation.

In 2020-2021, the **Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** worked closely with UNESCO to offer aid for the health sector. This led to the creation of the Palestinian national initiative for engaging higher education sector to help overcome the Covid-19 crisis. This initiative comes in the context of an emergency plan to engage senior students from faculties of medicine at Palestinian universities. The project trains selected students to be volunteers in fighting the pandemic, in addition to giving them access to protective medical equipment.

The Republic of Botswana is a State Party to the Convention against Doping in Sport and has embraced the convention's fundamental principles: the protection of the physical and mental health of athletes, both amateurs and professionals, and the preservation of sport ethics and values. In 2013, Botswana was one of the beneficiaries of the Fund for Elimination of Doping

¹¹⁶ International Convention against Doping in Sport - <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000142594>

in Sport in 2013.¹¹⁷ The “Clean Sport” anti-doping awareness-raising and education programme focused on athletes and members of their entourage at various stages in their careers. This target group included coaches, managers, National Federations (NFs) administrators, teachers, parents, and medical staff. This support had a clear impact over the years and culminated with the winning of a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics. This was a new African record and demonstrated the direct impact of UNESCO and the commission’s collaboration in this field.

UNESCO’s National Commission of the Philippines

is also very involved in the promotion of anti-doping initiatives in the Philippines. Starting from 2014, the commission coordinated with the Philippine National Anti-Doping Organisation (PHI-NADO) that is mandated to oversee the implementation of the International Convention against Doping in Sports. This collaboration led to the launch of a campaign addressed to young people aimed to promote anti-doping in sports. The project also included a national summit, an anti-doping sports education seminar, and two conferences held in the Visayas and Mindanao region. In prior years, the National Commission combined with the Southeast Asia Centre for Lifelong Education for Sustainable Development, to support the production and dissemination to key stakeholders of the publication entitled: “Towards a True and Clean Sporting Environment in Southeast Asia.”

The **Kenya National Commission for UNESCO**, working jointly with UNESCO, UNICEF and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, spearheaded the development of a policy for physical education and sports from 2018-2019. The finalised policy was launched in June 2021 by the Minister of Education of Kenya.



Technical Working Group Members who drafted the Physical Education and Sport Policy for Kenya.
© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO Commission of the Philippines

¹¹⁷ Fund for the Elimination of Doping in Sport,
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/sport-and-anti-doping/fund>



Natural Sciences

Japanese scientists, 1962.
© UN Photo

Russian scientist Dimitri Mendeleev once said: “It is the function of science to discover the existence of a general reign of order in nature and to find the causes governing this order. And this refers in equal measure to the relations of man – social and political – and to the entire universe as a whole.”¹¹⁸

Thinking of natural sciences as processes that need to consider the complexity of both natural and social environments is very important for UNESCO. The organisation works to advance and promote science in the interests of peace, sustainable development and human security and well-being, in close collaboration with its member states and a wide variety of partners. It is the only United Nations specialised agency, symbolised by the ‘S’ in the acronym, with a specific mandate for science.

“Harmony between humans and nature is key, maintaining the earth’s biodiversity has to be part of our daily lives.”

*Ms Shamila Nair Bedouelle,
Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences*

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a key milestone in the recognition of the contribution of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to sustainable development. Solutions to today’s global challenges need a cross-sectoral response and in this regard, UNESCO mobilises scientific knowledge in the context of its multidisciplinary mandate in education, culture, the social and human sciences, and communication.

Since its foundation in 1945, UNESCO has acted as a catalyst for the establishment of many, now leading, scientific unions and bodies such as the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN.) UNESCO acts as a platform for sharing ideas and standard setting, as a catalysator for international cooperation, promotes dialogue between scientists and policy makers and supports programmes for capacity-building.

The key international programmes in science are: Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP), Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), International Geoscience and Geoparks (IGGP) and the International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP). Additionally, UNESCO’s Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme (LINKS) promotes local and indigenous knowledge and its inclusion in global climate science and policy processes, and its World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) produces reliable information in various fields of water resources developments and management. These programmes are supported by extensive networks and benefit from the concrete experience gained from the UNESCO designated sites: biosphere reserves, UNESCO Global Geoparks and natural sites inscribed on the World Heritage list. In addition, to these programmes there is the autonomous Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO), which is the United Nations body responsible for supporting global ocean science and services.

¹¹⁸ Dmitri Mendeleev, Mendeleev on the Periodic Law: Selected Writings, 1869 – 1905. Dover Publications, April 25, 2013.

Natural Sciences and the National Commissions

Many countries established national initiatives of collaboration with UNESCO in the field of natural sciences very early on. These decisions had a decisive impact on national strategies in the field of scientific research. Turkey represents an example in this direction. With the support of UNESCO, the **Turkish National Commission for UNESCO** prepared a legislative proposal to establish a scientific and technological research centre in the country. The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) was established in 1963, and is still the major funding agency for scientific research in Turkey.

In 1988, UNESCO, with support of the **Uganda National Commission for UNESCO**, helped the country to establish the Department of Food Science and Technology at the Makerere University. This department became Uganda's leading centre for training and research in food sciences, food technology and human nutrition. For more than three decades it has been at the forefront of training and research for the nascent food sector in Uganda's economy, with special emphasis on the dynamic and global nature of the food and nutrition subsector. A number of technologies emerging from the centre's work have been patented.

The **Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO** took the lead in establishing the International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP) in 2003. The idea of IBSP establishment was at first proposed by Academician Vladimir Fortov, President of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO between 1988-2005. The initiative was launched by Russia in 1999. The programme aims to create a unifying mechanism for the transfer, and sharing, of advances in the basic sciences, and for the implementation of global projects. IBSP initiated large-scale activities aimed at national research capacity-building and training human resources through international and regional cooperation.



School of Food Technology, Nutrition and Bioengineering at Makerere University. © Uganda National Commission for UNESCO



Vladimir Fortov (1946-2020), Former President of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Vice-chairman of the Presidential Council for Science and Education and member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the UN Secretary-General. © Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO

The development of basic research is one of the key conditions for achieving the 2030 Agenda Goals. The UNESCO-Russia Mendelev International Prize in the Basic Sciences, which offers US\$500,000 per edition is a follow-up initiative. The prize was created following the International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements in 2019.

The **Jordan National Commission for Education, Culture and Science** endorsed the construction of the first synchrotron radiation facility in the Middle East, developed under the auspices of UNESCO. Named the Synchrotron-Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME), it has been established as an autonomous intergovernmental



Radiological scanning. © Jordan Atomic Energy Commission



Ministry of Technical and Higher Education, New England, Freetown, 2021.
© Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO

research centre modeled on CERN. It currently has eight members: Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan, Palestine, and Turkey. The facility has been envisioned as a centre of excellence based on “third-generation” light source.

In 2017, the adoption of a revised recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers helped reflect the ethical and regulatory challenges of science governance today. The **Canadian Commission for UNESCO** together with Health Canada launched a consultation involving more than 100 organisations and experts to get a Canadian perspective on some of the proposed additions. These included the role of scientific researchers in national policies, the education and training of researchers, and the challenges and promotion of careers in science. Between 2018-2019, the commission worked

closely with the **Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO** to draft and disseminate: “An Introduction to UNESCO’s Updated Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers”.¹¹⁹ This document has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese and Korean, with the collaboration of these countries’ National Commissions, to guide researchers and policymakers in applying an international set of values and guidelines.

The **Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO** started a project entitled: “Strengthening Science, Technology, and Innovation Systems for Sustainable Development in Africa.” The first phase of the programme will start between 2020 and 2022, and the second phase will extend until 2025. This initiative builds on UNESCO’s global framework for monitoring, policy support and advocacy following the standard setting instrument: “UNESCO Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers”.¹²⁰

Awarding scientists for their achievements is not just an opportunity to support established scientists. It is also a way to inspire youth aiming to contribute to natural science research. However, reaching out to people outside the scientific community is a key aspect of science as well. The most recent pandemic demonstrated the importance of scientific communication and popularisation of science. The UNESCO Kalinga Prize for Popularization of Science, Biennial since 2009, is a prestigious award given by UNESCO for exceptional skills in presenting scientific ideas to lay people.¹²¹ It was created in 1951, with participation of the **Indian National Commission for UNESCO**, following a donation from Shri Bijoyanand Patnaik, then Chief Minister of Orissa, India, and Founder President of the Kalinga Foundation Trust. Past winners have been scientists including Nobel Laureates as well as persons trained in journalism or educators/writers. The recipient

¹¹⁹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260889.page=116>

¹²⁰ https://en.unesco.org/themes/ethics-science-and-technology/recommendation_science

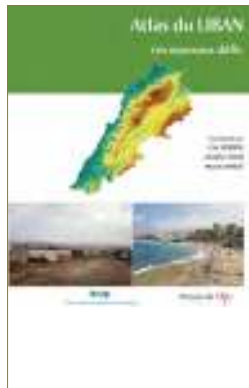
¹²¹ UNESCO Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science, <https://en.unesco.org/prizes/kalinga>

receives US\$40,000 and the UNESCO Albert Einstein Silver Medal. The recipient is also awarded the Kalinga Chair, introduced by the Government of India in 2001. The Kalinga Chair holder is invited to visit educational institutions in India for two to four weeks to meet and talk to students.

UNESCO's work in Natural Sciences becomes extremely useful in the context of assessing risk—especially in case of seismic waves or tsunamis. Following a major earthquake in 2008 in South Lebanon, the **Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO** supported projects involving student visits to the Geophysical Research Centre. The commission, in collaboration with the National Council for Scientific Research of Lebanon, was able to assess a number of schools from a geomorphological point of view, especially those located in mountainous or rural areas. In those areas, students, teachers, and other stakeholders benefited from awareness-raising training concerning seismic risk. One of the project's key features was to update textbooks with this new information. Other initiatives included the creation of a seismicity map of Lebanon and organising a national symposium on this topic with the Ministry of National Education.

In the same vein, the **New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO**, supported youth-led engagement for disaster risk reduction. In 2011, following the disastrous earthquake which shook Christchurch, 100 young leaders from around the Asia Pacific region gathered at the *Looking Beyond Disaster (LBD) Youth Forum*. As a result of the forum, the *Looking Beyond Disaster Toolkit* was created by youth for youth (with the support of the New Zealand National Commission) to enable the sharing of stories and lessons learnt through the experiences of natural disasters, and promote the development of new disaster risk reduction initiatives.

The forum led to the creation of a global youth network and strategy for disaster response and recovery, with direct support from the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO in partnership with the Bangkok UNESCO Office and the UNESCO Office



Seismicity map of Lebanon.
© Lebanese National
Commission for UNESCO



Young students working on the Beyond Disaster Toolkit.
© New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO



Experts Panel at the Workshop.
© Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO



Microscience teacher and students across the country.
© Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO



Girls during one of the mentorship sessions
at the African Engineering Week Conference, Mombasa, 2018.
© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO



Mentorship of girls for Nakuru, Kericho, Bomet and Narok Counties
at Moi Tea Girls High School in 2019.
© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO

for the Pacific States in Apia. It was followed in 2012 by a second forum in Sendai, Japan and the *PowerShift Pacific: Looking Beyond Disaster Youth Forum*, held in Auckland New Zealand.

The objectives of the Natural Sciences programmes cannot be reached in the absence of a solid educational base. That is why many National Commissions choose to combine these two key aspects of UNESCO's work. A good example is the organisation of the International Workshop on "Science Education for Sustained Development" in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 2011. The **Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO**, the country's Ministry of Education and the UNESCO Dhaka Office collaborated in the creation of a series of workshops which put the spotlight on science education as a determinant factor for attaining the objectives of Agenda 2030.

Science education plays a key role for Jamaica, which led to the launch of the UNESCO Global Microscience Project in 1996 and its revival in 2012. The project, supported by the **Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO**, targeted secondary schools across the country which involved 20 schools and more than 200 teachers. Contributions from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MOEYI) helped the inclusion of eight teacher-training institutions and a further 27 primary schools. In addition, the ministry developed an online portal and a manual to support the teaching of microscience in schools across the island. This project can lead to the development of a wider network of such activities in the Caribbean.

UNESCO, through cooperation with the **Eswatini National Commission for UNESCO**, supported the development of the Science, Mathematics and Technology Education policy in Eswatini in 2012.

In the area of science education, the UNESCO/ Government of Kenya Scientific Camps of Excellence for Mentoring girls is a good example of how to involve

girls and women in STEM.¹²² Initiated in 2014, it brought together girls in the first three years of their secondary level of education, aiming to unlocking their potential in STEM for a secure and sustainable future. A total of 161 schools with a participation of more than 2,000 girls have gone through the one-week mentorship programme. A study, conducted in 2020 with support of the **Kenya National Commission for UNESCO**, documents the impacts of this programme on continuing students' performance in STEM subjects, STEM courses and career choices and STEM teachers. This can constitute an example of best practices in combining gender priority and science education.

In the same vein, the **Botswana National Commission for UNESCO** placed an emphasis on science education, by honouring two of the winners of the 11th Sub-Saharan Africa Young Talent Awards L'Oréal-UNESCO for Women in Science. High-ranking officials present at the event, which was held virtually in 2020, underlined the role of women in leading scientific research. UNESCO and Fondation L'Oréal award 20 prizes for upcoming African women researchers annually. This is a key initiative underlining UNESCO's work in promoting gender equality.

The **Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO**, with support from UNESCO, also used the microscience kits science education. The project, which began in 2021, focused on the mainstreaming of microscience kits methodology into the national STEM education curricula.

The **French National Commission** supported the country's focus on hydrological sciences through the creation of a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in Montpellier: The International Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on the Dynamics of Water Systems (ICiReWaRD). This centre is led by the Montpellier Institute for Water and the Environment (IM2E), which constitutes the largest structured



Workshop on Evaluating the Mainstreaming of Micro-Science Kit Education in Sierra Leone. Freetown, 2021.

© Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO



Eco-responsible vegetable garden at UNESCO headquarters.

© French National Commission for UNESCO

¹²² <https://en.unesco.org/news/stem-kenya-digital-programme-launch>



VII Regional Meeting of the Steering Committee of the International Hydrological Programmes. © Cape Verdean National Commission for UNESCO



Training of National Geopark Committee by the experts from German Geoparks supported by the German Commission for UNESCO.
© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO



Meeting local communities during the mapping of geosites.
© Kenya National Commission for UNESCO

community in France in the field of water sciences. It will play a key role in the implementation of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and thus contribute significantly to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 by 2030.

Attempting to raise awareness of the need to revive our urban environments, the commission has also initiated the creation of an Eco-Responsible Vegetable Garden at UNESCO Headquarters. Numerous varieties of vegetables from all regions of the world are grown there, contributing to the ecological transition of UNESCO and its spaces. The project's aims are threefold: symbolic, educational, and productive. This initiative is also a call for more sustainable consumption and the preservation of ecosystems.

The **Cape Verdean National Commission for UNESCO** supports many initiatives in the field of natural sciences. One of them, focused on hydrology, took place in October 2019. Experts from 26 African countries met at the VII Regional Meeting of the Steering Committee of the International Hydrological Programme–IHP, organised in partnership with UNESCO. The meeting aimed to establish priorities for IHP-Africa as well as to identify programmes that need to be launched in the region.

Another key area of action for the Republic of Cabo Verde is the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB). Since 2010, the country aimed to establish the islands of Maio and Fogo as biosphere reserves. The status was eventually granted in October 2020.

More recently, the popularisation of science has taken a digital form. In June 2020, the **Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO** in collaboration with UNESCO Global Geoparks' Network and the Lesvos Global Geopark co-organised the first Digital Course on UNESCO Global Geoparks. The online course was hosted by the University of the Aegean and the Natural History Museum of the Lesvos Petrified Forest. Entitled: "Territories of Resilience," the class included presentations, discussions and workshops created by

28 Geopark experts. The course was very successful and drew participants from 42 countries. It contained information on the Geoparks network and offered in-depth knowledge about geological heritage protection and management. It also showcased a variety of tools for sustainable local development. The course provided an opportunity for participants to discover how UNESCO's networks and, in particular, Global Geoparks managed the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, while making a meaningful impact on local communities. This course is an excellent example of how scientific programmes can build their digital twin, and get experts and the wider community involved.

The **Kenya National Commission for UNESCO** is involved in the development of the Global Geoparks Network. In 2018 it began the process of nominating a few sites in Baringo within the Great Rift Valley. The initiative received technical support from the German Commission for UNESCO.

Kenya joined the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves by adding six reserves to the list. The creation of the African Network of Biosphere Reserves (AfriMAB) in 1996 contributed to this achievement. The participation of young people in these projects and processes is essential. In 1989, UNESCO launched the MAB Young scientist awards.¹²³ By 2019, a total of 31 Kenyans had applied and five had been awarded the grant.

Looking back at the creation of the Man and the Biosphere programme, the **German Commission for UNESCO** has been a key driver for its establishment in the 1960s. The commission aimed for the creation of an intergovernmental scientific programme that would help establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments. At the 1964 General Conference, Germany introduced a resolution that led to the historical "Biosphere Conference". In 1966 and April 1968, the commission organised two international colloquia on the sustainable use of



Group photo during a consultative meeting with stakeholders during the process to extend Mount Kenya BR to include Lewa Conservancy and Ngare Ndare Forest. © Kenya National Commission for UNESCO



Dr Magda Staudinger, who was initially, in the early 1960s, the driving force for the German engagement for MAB, in 1973, speaking at a women's conference in Kiel.

© Magnussen, Friedrich (1914-1987) BY-SA 3.0 DE

¹²³ <https://en.unesco.org/mab/awards#young-scientists>



Project in East Vättern Scarp Landscape Biosphere Reserve where refugees learnt about beekeeping.
© East Vättern Scarp Landscape Biosphere Reserve



Participants working actively in Bandos Island Resort.
© Maldives National Commission for UNESCO



Participants beating the shea nut paste during the practical session of the training. © Malian National Commission for UNESCO

nature, on the island of Mainau in Lake Constance and in Berchtesgaden. Currently there are 727 biosphere reserves in 131 countries, including 22 transboundary sites. The German Commission for UNESCO and Germany have remained strong proponents of the MAB programme ever since, and support investments in biosphere reserves with bilateral development cooperation.

Contributing to the MAB programme is also the focus of the **Swedish National Commission for UNESCO** in the field of natural sciences. The commission launched an initiative to strengthen the role of the national MAB programme some 30 years ago. This has led to a number of changes in the way MAB is implemented nationally. In Sweden there is a national coordinator, who is also the key person representing Sweden international in the field of biosphere reserves. There is also a committee of relevant experts, which guide the work with UNESCO on the MAB programme. Sweden reports directly on how the biosphere reserves contribute to the 2030 Agenda.

In October 2019, the **Malian National Commission for UNESCO** and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation held a national training workshop on women's empowerment through the promotion of income-generating activities in the Boucle du Baoulé Biosphere Reserve in Néguela in the Kati circle (Koulikoro region). This initiative, which brought together 20 participants, aims to support women's activities in the Boucle du Baoulé Biosphere Reserve. The training opens avenues for entrepreneurial activities in their region. Such training can be a very good way to bring in sustainability initiatives and put entrepreneurship at the forefront, while supporting women's empowerment in protected areas.



Nordhordland UNESCO
Biosphere Reserve.
© Nordhordland MAB area

The **Maldives National Commission for UNESCO** is actively involved in the Man and the Biosphere Programme. One of the most recent initiatives which took place in 2019 is the inclusion of two atolls (Addu Atoll and Fuvahmulah Atoll) on the Biosphere Reserve List. This is a key step in protecting the Maldives' vulnerable environment. It also contributes to the long-term goal of declaring the whole country a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

The **Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO** is very active in the Biosphere Reserve Network. In 2019 it added the Nordhordland Biosphere Reserve. The main objective of appointing Nordhordland UNESCO Biosphere is to bring sustainability work into action in this region. This inscription can inspire other regions, such as Lofoten, Finnmark and Telemark, to become Biosphere Reserves. The network of Biosphere Reserves in Norway contributes to attaining the UN's 2030 Agenda, together with other Nordic countries.

Biosphere Reserves play a key role for Uganda in the country's collaboration with UNESCO. The designation of two Biosphere Reserves, namely Queen Elizabeth in 1979 and Mount Elgon in 2005, followed by the inscription of two natural heritage sites—Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and Rwenzori Mountains National Park in 1994—had a considerable impact, both at the policy level but also for Ugandan citizens. The inscriptions created awareness for ecosystem and heritage preservation and conservation, as well as sustainable use in tourism and education. The **Uganda National Commission for UNESCO** works actively for the promotion of further sites, as more than 40 new areas were mapped between 2016–2020.

Often the biosphere reserves nominations are joint initiatives between two or more countries, followed up by their National Commissions for **UNESCO**. One of these examples is the cooperation between the **Republic of North Macedonia** and **Republic of Albania** over the nomination of the Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve in 2014. The Transboundary Biosphere Reserve comprises both watersheds of the connected Lakes Ohrid and Prespa



A tree-climbing lion and a gazelle or Uganda Kob in Queen Elizabeth Biosphere Reserve.
© Uganda National Commission for UNESCO



Bwindi Impenetrable Forest,
middle and below is Mt Elgon Features
with some of the biodiversity
in the Biosphere Reserve.
© Uganda National Commission
for UNESCO



and it accommodates 454,000 inhabitants in both countries. This nomination therefore has a direct impact for the two nations.

In almost 30 years of existence of the **Slovak Commission for UNESCO**, Slovakia has intensively cooperated with UNESCO in the sphere of preservation and promotion of natural World Heritage sites, Geoparks and Biosphere Reserves. In recent years the most important development was the renomination of the Slovak components of the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe. UNESCO and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature played a crucial role in ensuring an adequate protection and conservation of these sites. Several Slovak experts have received accolades in the field of environment conservation. Their work contributed significantly to the management of other protected natural areas in Slovakia, and inspired other biosphere reserves to share their expertise and cooperate both nationally and internationally.

In 1989, the **Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science**, in collaboration with UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB), organised an Arab training course on oceans governance and maintenance in the Arab world. The course offered perspectives for the protection of Arab countries' natural heritage. The seminar proposed ways to enhance the coordination of national, regional and international efforts in this field. It also assessed the state of natural heritage in the Arab region, current legislations, and governance challenges in operating, maintaining and governing natural reserves. The course opened avenues for development of projects in this area.

The **Spanish National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO** actively supported the establishment of the MAB Programme in 1993. The commission is instrumental in the promotion of biosphere reserves, both in Spain and in the Ibero-American and Caribbean Network.



Ohrid Transboundary Biosphere Reserve inclusion in the World Network of Biosphere Reserve, 2014. © National Commission for UNESCO of the Republic of North Macedonia

The **Korean National Commission for UNESCO** played a leading role in establishing the East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network (EABRN) in 1995.¹²⁴ The main goal was to harmonise biodiversity conservation with sustainability. EABRN is a regional network supporting the MAB programme and has three priority themes for cooperation: ecotourism, conservation policy, and trans-boundary cooperation. The network facilitates the exchange of information between biosphere reserves and governing bodies. It conducts regular regional meetings as well as training workshops for biosphere reserve managers. The seven members of



Director of the World Heritage Centre Ms Mechtild Rössler during her visit in Slovakia in 2017 with the former director of the Polana Biosphere Reserve Ms Vladimira Fabriciusova. Ms Fabriciusova was awarded the Michel Batisse Award for best management of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in 2017.
© Permanent Delegation of Slovakia to UNESCO



Michel Batisse Award ceremony in UNESCO, 2017.
© Permanent Delegation of Slovakia to UNESCO

the network—China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation— continue to strengthen their cooperation through EABRN with the support of UNESCO's Beijing Office, which has served as the EABRN's Secretariat since 2003.

The Regional Post-Graduate School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests (ERAIFT) in 1999 by 11 African States was created with the support of the MAB programme. The school focuses on “forest environment”, managed in a systemic approach. ERAIFT welcomes students and researchers from 22 African countries. In 2021 it became a Category 2 Centre. The **National Commission for UNESCO of the Democratic Republic of the Congo** actively supports the graduate schools' programmes. Currently ERAIFT organises four regional Master degrees. They are in Protected Area Management, Forest Management Techniques, Biosphere Reserve Management, and Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Lands. Active in the two biosphere reserves of the Democratic Republic of Congo, ERAIFT is responsible for the scientific coordination of the only greenhouse gas measuring tower in the Congo Basin, installed in the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve.

The organisation of forums and conferences in the natural sciences sector opens platforms for debate and often they set the stage for policy initiatives. In May 2000, the **UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines** organised a key meeting of the Man and Biosphere Programme. Entitled ECOTONE IX, it was held under the title: “Wise Practices in Coastal Tourism Development in Protected Areas,” and aimed to provide a forum for creative solutions planning and implementing sustainable tourism in UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. ECOTONE IX supported local entrepreneurs and stakeholders in gaining knowledge and skills to support sustainable development in Puerto Galera UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Among the Caribbean islands, the **Saint Kitts and Nevis National Commission** for UNESCO took the

lead and became the first English-speaking Caribbean country to launch a MAB Reserve in June 2011. In the same year, it hosted a conference on “Climate Change Adaptation in the Caribbean: Science, Ethics and Policies”.¹²⁵ The event gathered regional experts, ministerial and governmental officials, as well as representatives from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The conference, which was the first of its kind in the sub-region, aimed to develop a “shared vision” which would enable the Caribbean region to mitigate, and adapt to, the damaging effects of climate change, especially acute in SIDS.

This was followed in March 2013 by the hosting of an inter-ministerial and experts conference on Biosphere Reserves in the Caribbean Sub-Region entitled: “Tools for Sustainable Development and Growth, in Saint Kitts & Nevis”.

A new initiative in this field was a symposium dedicated to freshwater policy for the Caribbean, which took place in October 2019. One of the meeting’s concrete outcomes of was the development of projects in the Caribbean on sustainable water resource management, with the support of UNESCO—IHP.

Public popularisation events for science are always a good opportunity to showcase both UNESCO’s impact, and the national efforts in bringing science into the everyday life. In March 2019, the **United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO** organised an event exploring how the “S” in UNESCO solves global challenges. The Science Museum hosted a “Lates” evening, demonstrating how science research is used in many of the UK’s UNESCO designations to understand our past and safeguard our future. It also showed that while technology is helping map climate change and providing access to clean water, science represents a key for global peace and sustainability.

¹²⁵ http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/programme-meetings/?tx_browser_pi1%5Bplugin%5D=46115&tx_browser_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=3250&chHash=1976ce5891



9th EABRN Meeting held in Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, 2005.
© Korean National Commission for UNESCO



Participants from the ECOTONE IX.
© UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines



Experts during the conference on “Climate Change Adaptation in the Caribbean: Science, Ethics and Policies.”
© Saint Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO



Experts during the conference on “Climate Change Adaptation in the Caribbean: Science, Ethics and Policies.”
© Saint Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO



North West Highlands UNESCO Global Geopark. © Wendy Hamlet

The events were attended by visitors from across the globe and attracted thousands of people. This event included the participation of UK Global Geoparks, Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage Sites, Memory of the World Inscriptions, and Creative Cities, UNESCO University Chairs and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission colleagues/designations.

The **United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO** has put forward another important project underlining UNESCO's impact on a particular country. The National Value of UNESCO Designations to the United Kingdom¹²⁶ shows how UNESCO is bringing sites, people and communities together, as well as creating and delivering value for the United Kingdom. The research, started in 2012, demonstrates that UNESCO designations deliver the UK's commitment to creating a more sustainable, peaceful, and equitable future at a local, national and international level.

It provides governments, stakeholders, communities, designations, and the public with an opportunity to understand the immense contribution that a global network makes to the UK economy. Published in 2020 by the UK National Commission for UNESCO, new research shows UNESCO projects can help build a greener, more equal and more peaceful world, while also creating financial value. UNESCO projects in the UK generate an estimated £151 million in financial benefits to local communities each year, and help bring them together to protect and conserve some of the most important places across the country. This report is the first to examine the cultural, environmental, and financial benefits to British life from these diverse UNESCO projects, and their active direct contribution to the SDGs. This type of research is pioneering and can be replicated by other National Commissions.

126 <https://www.unesco.org.uk/national-value>

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission

An old Chinese legend describes the beginning of civilisation emerging from an immense flood. A quote attributed to Emperor Yao said: “Rising and ever rising, it threatens the very heavens.”¹²⁷ Out of the flood, saving civilisation, arrived a hero separating oceans from land. According to the story, that man was Yu, founder of China’s first dynasty, the Xia. Over the course of decades, Yu organised a dredging campaign, dug channels that would carry the water back to its source, and pioneered a tradition of great Chinese public works.

Beyond legend, the ocean, the source of water, remains at the centre of our world, connecting countries and destinies. French explorer and scientist Jacques Cousteau said: “The sea, the great unifier, is man’s only hope. Now, as never before, the old phrase has a literal meaning: we are all in the same boat.”¹²⁸

This message was taken to heart by UNESCO, following the organisation of the first International Oceanographic Congress, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in 1959.¹²⁹ The congress demonstrated that “oceanography has passed from blind exploration and accidental discovery into a full-fledged science bent on a systematic investigation of the last great frontier of this planet”.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Sarah Kaplan, “Legends say China began in a great flood. Scientists just found evidence that the flood was real,” *The Washington Post*, August 4, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2016/08/04/legends-say-china-began-in-a-great-flood-scientists-just-found-evidence-that-the-flood-was-real/>

¹²⁸ Jacques Cousteau quoted in Bridget Nicholls, “How Cousteau inspired my love of the oceans,” *BBC News*, November 20, 2010. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-11789975>

¹²⁹ Dael Wolfe, *The 1959 Oceanographic Congress: An Informal History*. In: Sears M., Merriman D. (eds) *Oceanography: The Past*. 1980. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-8090-0_5

¹³⁰ Gerald Wendf, “The ocean depth – terra incognita”, *UNESCO Courier*, December 1959, pp. 4–9.

“Let us use the transformative science to align the work of governments, long-term interests of companies, and aspirations of citizens and mainstream sustainability in every aspect of our lives, including our close links to the ocean.”

*Mr Vladimir Ryabinin,
Executive Secretary of IOC*

A year later, in 1960, UNESCO created the IOC and officially launched the international Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE), one of the most important of UNESCO programmes in the 1960s. It sent a powerful signal that oceanographic research should be a major field for international collaboration. This international scientific expedition created an important forum for cooperation among scientists belonging to different nations and ideological camps. UNESCO aimed, once again, to provide a space for dialogue and exchange, and in this case, that space was the vast Indian Ocean.

Today UNESCO’s IOC continues to be an international platform to coordinate programmes in marine research services, observation systems, hazard mitigation and capacity development to understand and effectively manage the resources of the ocean and coastal areas. IOC’s work in ocean observation and science contributes to building a knowledge base about the science of climate change. IOC sponsors the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP), and the IOC’s Global Ocean Observing System serves as the ocean component of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), which supports the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

At a systemic level, the IOC is supporting all its 150 member states to build their scientific and institutional capacity to achieve the global goals including the UN Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals,



Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre— Regional Tsunami Service Provider of IOC-UNESCO/IOTWMS
© Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO



E-Class Room Facility of UNESCO Category 2. Centre at International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOOcean), India
© Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO

the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction.

India, as one of the 40 member states that supported the resolution to establish the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) in 1961, has since been a key partner in programmes related to Ocean Observations, Science, Modelling & Forecasting, Data & Information Services as well as Ocean Hazards and Capacity Development. To further these activities, in 2017 the Ministry of Earth Sciences, in close collaboration with UNESCO and the **Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO**, established a UNESCO Category 2 International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography. The centre has trained 3,600 researchers from 85 countries until now. At the same time, India hosts the international project offices of International Indian Ocean Expedition and Indian Ocean Global Ocean Observing System.

The Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami on December 26, 2004, off the coast of Banda Aceh was the third-largest ever recorded and one of the most devastating in history. Starting from 2005, **Germany** supported the IOC in establishing regional tsunami warning systems, within the framework of its support to Indonesia in setting up its national tsunami warning system

(GITEWS). In March 2011 the system was completely handed over to the Indonesian authorities. A follow-up project until 2014 helped safeguard the system's functionality in the long run. GITEWS has successfully registered thousands of earthquakes and more than a dozen tsunamis, all of them within five minutes. The Jakarta 24/7 warning centre relies on seismometers, GPS stations and tide gauges. The effect of this initiative is key in the long run, to mitigate seismic and tsunami risk in the region.

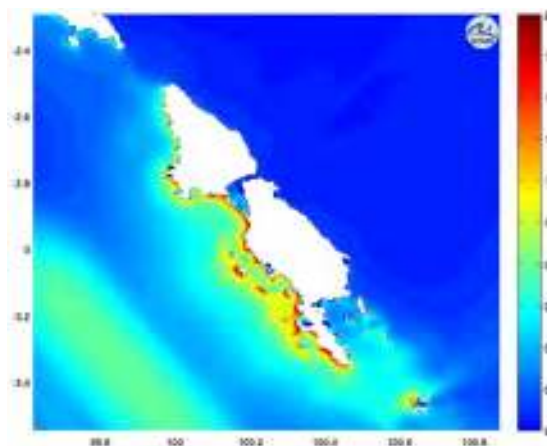
Following the launch of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO in July 1960, the Korean Oceanographic Commission (KOC) was established in 1961 to promote oceanography at a national level. The **Korean National Commission for UNESCO** works closely with KOC in its efforts to strengthen the national base for oceanography. In the 1960s, KOC helped promote oceanography through education, training and research. One important development came through KOC's participation in the Cooperative Study of the Kuroshio and Adjacent Regions (CSK) from 1965 to 1971. This experience brought home to KOC the necessity of nurturing Korean oceanographers and paved the way for the establishment by the National Commission and KOC of the Korean Society of Oceanography (KSO)

in July 1966. KSO's establishment prompted further development of the Republic of Korea's professional human resources in oceanography. For instance, the first Department of Oceanography was established at Seoul National University in 1968.

In 1991, Moscow State University launched international maritime expeditions, involving students, young scientists and teachers, to study complex geological processes on the continental margins of Europe and North Africa and on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. In 1993, the Russian State Hydrometeorological University started a regional project entitled “Baltic Floating University”. Since 1996, the **Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO** supported both projects to be carried out within the framework of the IOC programmes on training, education and mutual assistance in the field of marine science.

Within this framework, since 1991 more than 1,200 students and teachers from 70 universities and research centres of 30 countries have participated in international maritime expeditions, taken part in 17 international conferences, and had the opportunity to publish in three special issues of peer-reviewed international journals. The Training-through-Research concept has been widely used around the world in training programmes for marine researchers. Floating universities have been organised, among others, by a consortium of universities in Australia, Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia and Japan. Russia continues to develop a network of more than a dozen floating universities, including the “Arctic Floating University” aboard the research vessel “Professor Molchanov”. The floating universities programme is particularly relevant in light of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Japan was one of the early advocates for marine science, being active in this field even before the establishment of IOC. Starting from 1952, Japan proposed the development of an UNESCO project focused on ocean development research. Ever since the IOC Assembly was held in 1960, Japan has consistently contributed



Modelling, by GITEWS, of the tsunami on 25 October 2010.
© GITEWS



Participants at the Training-through-Research, on a floating university.
© Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO

to the IOC as one of its Executive Council Members, focusing on ocean observation, data exchange, capacity development, regional activities, construction of tsunami early warning systems, and ocean literacy. At the regional level, to support scientific projects in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan and the **Japanese National Commission for UNESCO** have been contributing for more than 40 years since the 1970s to the IOC Sub-Commission for Western Pacific—not only



Regional Planning Workshop for the North Pacific and Western Pacific Marginal Seas towards the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development held in Tokyo from July to August 2019.

© Japanese National Commission for UNESCO



ODC 9th Training course on Climate Dynamics and Air-Sea Interactions, 2019.

© RTRC-ODC /Wang Qilong

through intellectual support but by contributing to human resources.

More recently Japan has been playing a central role in preparation for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), developing awareness-raising campaigns for the UN Ocean Decade, holding regional meetings in Tokyo, and participating in the Executive Planning Group in formulating the Implementation Plan for the UN Ocean Decade. Japan also established its own National Committee for the UN Ocean Decade.

In the run-up to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the **Canadian Commission for UNESCO** endorsed a series of activities in this area. In November 2020, it

partnered with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Science Policy Conference on a symposium to discuss “Proactively Planning for Gender Equity in the Emerging Blue Economy”. Together with Canada’s national science museums, the Commission will be promoting women in ocean science during the International Decade through a website, videos and social media. In the same vein, in 2021, the commission marked the International Day for Women and Girls in Science through dedicated virtual events, in partnership with IOC and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

In 2011 the **National Commission of the People’s Republic of China for UNESCO** supported the launch of the UNESCO/IOC Regional Training and Research Centre on Ocean Dynamic and Climate (RTRC-ODC). The centre is dedicated to improving research capacity on ocean dynamics, air-sea interaction and numerical modeling in a sustainable and systematic manner. Almost 400 young scientists from 43 countries and more than 50 world-renowned experts benefited from nine training programmes established at the centre. The RTRC-ODC will continue to play an active role in ensuring the sustainability of ocean science in the context of the Ocean Decade (2021-2030).

The **Flemish Commission for UNESCO**

directly contributes to IOC’s mission, supporting and hosting the IOC’s Project Office for ‘International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange’ (IODE) at the Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) in Ostend. This is a worldwide reference for ocean data and information management. The Project Office supports the ‘Ocean Data and Information Networks’ (ODIN) as well as the IODE process for accreditation of national ocean data centres. It develops and hosts the ‘World Ocean Database’ and the ‘Ocean Biodiversity Information System’ (OBIS)—an online atlas holding distribution of documented marine fauna and flora. These global data systems are crucial resources in addressing the effects of climate change, protecting ocean biodiversity and supporting global ocean assessments. Since 2002, the IODE Project Office has been able to help set up and operate regional

and specialised training centres, forming a global network for capacity development, and operating in various major languages. The “Ocean Teacher Global Academy” supports training programmes related to ocean research, observations and services in all IOC member states.

In April 2019, the **UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines** together with the Department of Foreign Affairs—Maritime and Ocean Affairs Office, University of the Philippines—Marine Science Institute, and the National Committee on Marine Science, hosted the 12th Intergovernmental Session of the IOC for the Western Pacific. More than a hundred participants, composed of foreign and local delegates from 16 member states and five international partners discussed improving policies focusing on conservation and sustainable use the oceans, seas, and marine resources. It defined strategic directions, ways of advancing international cooperation on marine science and discussed recommendations on the programme and budget.

A milestone activity during the session was the signing of letters of intent between the IOC and University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute for the establishment of a Regional Training and Research Centre (RTRC) on Reef Management and Restoration. The IOC and the Institute of Oceanography, Viet Nam Academy of Science and Technology also signed letters of intent for the establishment of RTRC on Marine Toxins and Seafood Safety.

Taking a different approach, the **Australian National Commission for UNESCO** also supported a project that raises awareness about the ocean and environment. The Words and Pictures project involved global participation of children in developing their own children’s books on themes of the sea and environment. The outcome of this initiative led to a book—the children in Solomon Islands illustrated the book and children in Australia wrote the story.



Sustainable Development Goals shown diving at the Komodo National Park and marine World Heritage site. © Michelle Vanmaele – UNESCO



Delegates to the 12th Intergovernmental Session of the IOC-WESTPAC in Manila, Philippines. © UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines



Signing of Letters of Intent between UNESCO-IOC and UP MSI for the establishment of RTRC on Reef Management and Restoration. © UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines



Gender Equality

Thailand, 1967.
© UN / UNESCO

Malala Yousafzai became a global symbol of girls and women's empowerment as the youngest Nobel Prize laureate. In her book, "I am Malala," she says: "No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men. There are two powers in the world; one is the sword, and the other is the pen. There is a third power stronger than both, that of women."¹³¹

"Stability and inclusive sustainable development are not possible without the presence, participation and progress of women."

*Ms Jamila Seftaoui,
Director of the Division for Gender Equality*

Gender equality is an essential component of UNESCO's work and vision, as one of the organisation's global priorities. For UNESCO, gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys.

Achieving gender equality means overcoming systemic, skewed power dynamics and societal vulnerabilities. It requires the reimagining and remaking of structures and systems. By placing gender equality at the heart of its mandate, UNESCO aims to contribute to a dynamic global agenda to advance human rights and gender equality in all its fields of competence.

From access to empowerment: UNESCO's strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019–2025 articulates the organisation's contribution to ensure equal access and equal empowerment for girls and boys, women and men, and all learners in and through education. Complementing the strategy, UNESCO's *Her education, our future* initiative accelerates action for girls' and women's education and leverages political and financial commitments for girls and women.

The question of gender equality is critical to achieving the sustainable development goals. Leaving half of the world's population behind is not an option. Equal opportunities, the ability to live full lives in freedom and dignity: these are not lofty ideals, but clear requirements for the future.

The work of National Commissions is essential for making UNESCO's vision of gender equality a reality. Their contribution, be it campaigns, events, platforms for debate, projects and programmes advancing gender equality goals, is crucial not only for UNESCO but for the wider international community.

¹³¹ Malala Yousafzai, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*, Little, Brown & Co. October 1, 2013, 31.



Participants Literacy Campaign for the Women of Char Khalifa with their products, 2016. © Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO

Contributing to gender equality through support for education, the **Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO** and Bridge Asia Programme of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, organised in 2015 a Literacy Campaign for the Women of Char Khalifa, one of the marginalised communities of Bangladesh. The campaign focused on combining literacy with life skills. Five hundred participants received basic information in health, hygiene, family planning, disaster management and sustainability. Following this initiative, 10 Adult Learning Centres were established in that area, with the support of the local community. In 2016, the participants received vocational training, which had an immediate impact by raising their overall living standard.

Women's education is also a key focus for the **National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO**. Since 2016 the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education has honoured outstanding contributions made by individuals, institutions, and organisations to advance girls' and women's education. It consists of an award of US\$50,000 to each laureate to help further their work on girls' and women's education. The prize contributes directly to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and, in particular, Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education and Goal 5 on gender equality.



More than 110 countries have submitted their nominations to the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education. © UNESCO

Two laureates are honoured annually. Since its initiation, more than 110 countries have submitted nominations and 11 awardees from Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Thailand, Egypt, Peru, Jamaica, Spain, Costa Rica, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Kenya have been honoured for their achievements in this field.

In 2018, one of the winners of the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education was the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation, located in Kingston, **Jamaica**. The centre received the award for their project entitled: *Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate*, which supports the reintegration of adolescent girls into the formal school system after the birth of a child. Receiving this certificate makes it possible for them to advance to tertiary education and pursue meaningful careers. The foundation's project has become such a powerful model that it has been replicated in other countries including Grenada, Guyana, and South Africa. These scalable initiatives demonstrate UNESCO's widening impact through close collaboration with the National Commissions, local communities and NGOs subscribing to UNESCO's mission.



Women's Centre at work. © WCJF

Focusing on another important area for women and girls' education, the **National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO**, contributed to a project entitled: "Strengthening employment opportunities and vocational training of refugee and internal displaced girls with incomplete education," initiated in 2017. The project helped women and internally displaced girls to learn and use information and communication technologies. It also sought to support them by preparing them for interviews, and other aspects of the world of work. The project also included training for the girls and their families on topics such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Additional Protocol, prevention of domestic violence, gender equality and national legislation, prevention of early marriages, women's empowerment, fight against human trafficking, women's labour rights. A conference dedicated to the project was held in 2017, addressing in an extensive manner the challenges of integrating refugees and internally displaced girls into society, and the needed measures.



Participants at the Science Camp for School Girls, 2011.
© Togolese National Commissions for UNESCO

In 2009, UNESCO implemented the first-ever job shadowing initiative in Eswatini, in partnership with the **Eswatini National Commission for UNESCO**, the Ministry of Education and Training and the local chapter of the Forum for African Women. The project was targeted mainly at girls to attract them to science and engineering careers. Furthermore, UNESCO supported sexual reproductive health initiatives for adolescent girls and contributed to creation of structured curriculum and a network of stakeholders at national level.

The **Togolese National Commissions for UNESCO** actively contributed to a Science Camp for Girls, which had as a main goal the familiarisation with, and orientation of girls, towards scientific fields. The camp, which took place in August 2011 in Notsè, Togo, gathered fifty participants admitted to different levels of education. The programme was varied and included fun science experiments and discussions with female scientists. The girls also had lessons in leadership and healthcare. Since its initiation the science camp has grown very popular and through the support of the National Commission, has become a permanent yearly event which motivates hardworking school children to participate.

The **Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO** and the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS-L) with support through the UNESCO Participation Programme, launched in March 2019 the National Observatory for Women in Research. Known as DAWReK'n, for “Dynamic Actions for Women in Research and Knowledge”, it translates into “your role” in the feminine plural in Arabic. The observatory’s mission expands beyond monitoring the status and situation of women researchers in Lebanon. It carries out various and concrete actions to improve the visibility of Lebanese women researchers through the dissemination of their work. It also encourages female doctoral students to continue their involvement in higher education through workshops and support for funding their research.



Members of the National Observatory for Women in Research.
© Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO

The **Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science**, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Teacher Creativity Centre, implemented a project in 2016-2017 entitled “The Young Girl Storytellers”. The initiative was based on using storytelling learning methodology (known as Hikaya telling), to help create an interactive learning environment in the classroom for a more efficient transfer of knowledge through storytelling, drawings and role-playing to ensure the participation of all students. Storytelling is accompanied by different methodologies of delivery, such as changing the tone of voice and facial expression, the use of puppets, drama, role playing, coloring activities and/or case scenarios. The project was concluded with a competition on story writing and drawing, in which the winning stories were published as a book and offered to school libraries.

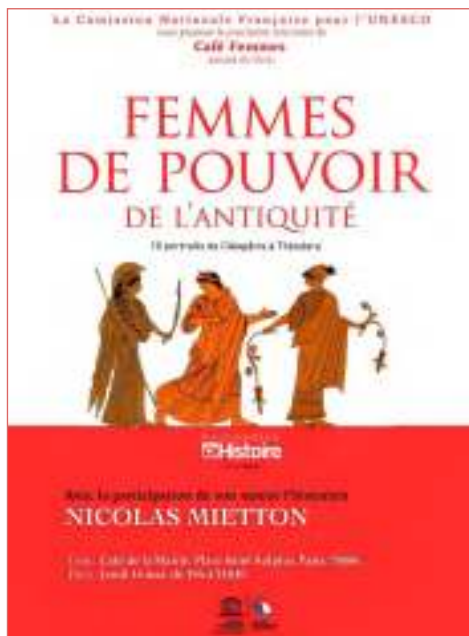


Participants in the Young Girls Storytellers Project.
© Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science

The **United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO** has contributed to the organisation’s work for Gender Equality through an in-depth briefing. The 2012 policy paper discussed in detail the criteria of benchmarking and evaluation of the priority, as well as offering recommendations for further debates.



Front page of the Policy Brief
“What should be the criteria to evaluate UNESCO’s Global Priority Gender Equality?” © UNESCO



Poster of the “Café femmes” event, May 16, 2019.
© French National Commission for UNESCO

Initiated in 2016 by the **French National Commission for UNESCO**, a series of conference-debates entitled “Women’s Cafés” is organised periodically in partnership with feminist organisations to promote gender equality and raise awareness of women’s rights, particularly in UNESCO’s fields of competence. Thus, on the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in Paris in 1948, the French Commission organised an event at Paris City Hall to pay tribute to two women, co-authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Eleanor Roosevelt (United States) and Hansa Mehta (India). The event was created in partnership with the French Coordination of the European Women’s Lobby (CLEF), the association *Femmes Monde* and the association *Femmes du Monde et Réciproquement*. The French Commission also contributed to the International Women’s Rights Forum, organised online in April 2021 by CLEF, in anticipation of the UN Generation Equality Forum that took place in Paris at the end of June 2021.



Participants during the Salamatu event, Waterloo, Freetown, 2019.
© Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO

In 2019 the **Sierra Leone National Commission for UNESCO** supported women’s participation in politics, through a series of videos produced by UNESCO under the project: “Improving Women’s Participation in Political Processes as Peacebuilding Ambassadors”, jointly implemented with UN Women and UNDP with support from the UN Peacebuilding Funds in Sierra Leone. “Salamatu” is an initiative to support a media campaign to capture and highlight the contributions of women in governance and peacebuilding efforts. In a political rivalry dominated by men and filled with intimidations, a vibrant and industrious woman, Salamatu joins the political race to advance the rights of women and end all forms of violence, injustice and discrimination against women.¹³² The commission supported the public screening of these videos in five regional headquarter towns: Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Port loko and Waterloo. It also recommended translating it into the major local languages, to increase impact.

Another way of supporting gender equality is making sure that women’s voices are heard and not silenced, including online. A key aspect that the **Swedish National Commission for UNESCO** focused on is the prevention of online violence against women journalists.

¹³² Salamatu, <https://en.unesco.org/news/salamatu>

In December 2016, the commission co-organised together with the Media Institute Fojo, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Swedish Institute a seminar in honour of the 250th anniversary of the Freedom of Press Act. On December 2, 1766, Sweden's parliament adopted the world's first Freedom of the Press Act, abolishing censorship and granting citizens access to public documents and the right to participate in political debates.

During the seminar women journalists and writers from all over the world gathered in Stockholm, to discuss hatred and threats against media workers around the world. It has been pointed out that in recent years, online hate has increased dramatically. No other professional group is subject to as many threats as journalists. Women journalists are particularly vulnerable, not just because they are scrutinising power, but also because they are women. Threats are made to silence journalists and to prevent what needs to be examined from being examined. The threats and hate campaigns do not only affect journalists. They are also a blow against freedom of expression, equality and, ultimately, against democracy.

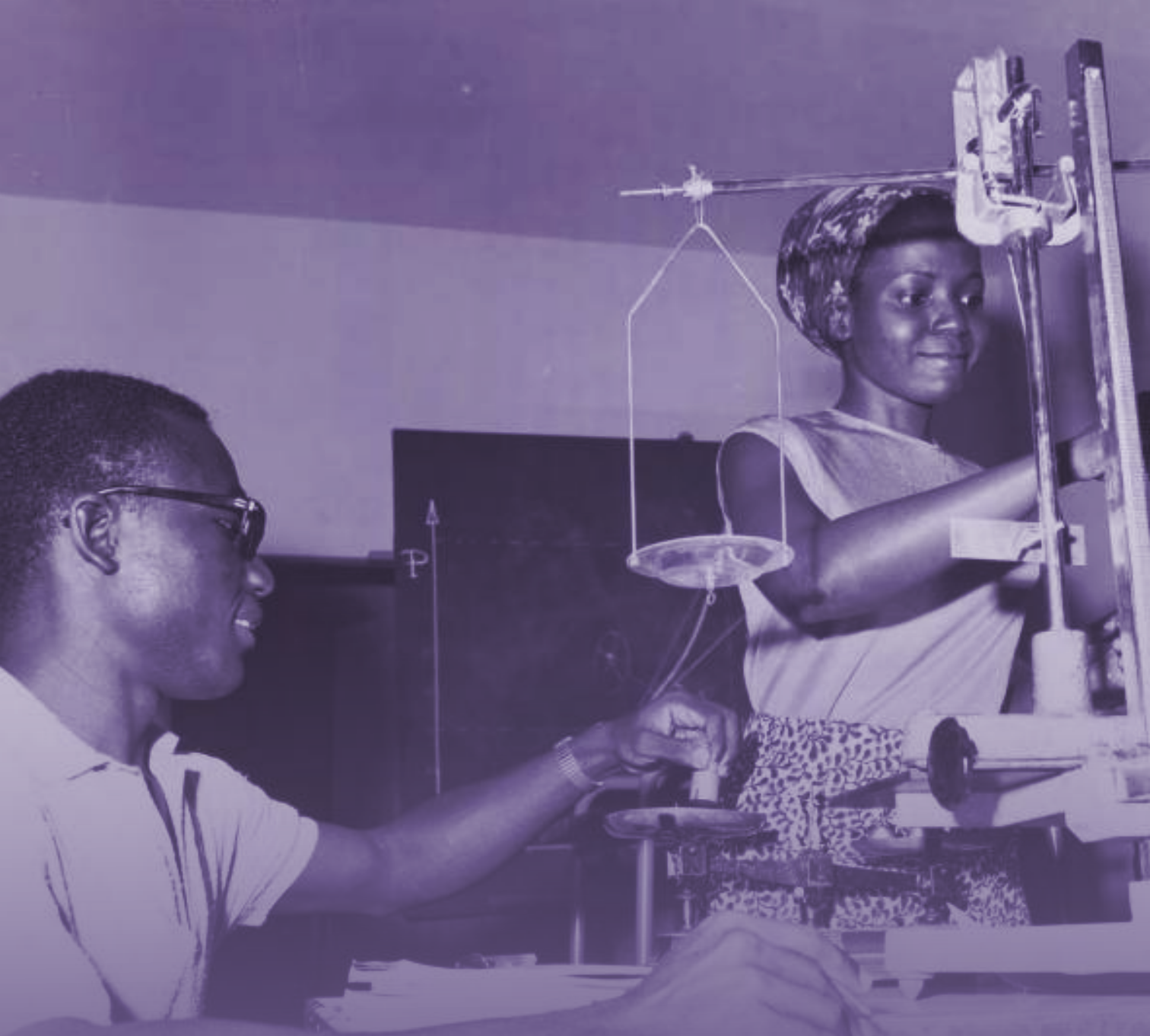
The endorsement of women's rights through participation at high-level events and accession to the conventions to protect women are also important in advancing gender equality. The first world conference on the status of women was convened in Mexico City, Mexico in 1975, which was chosen as International Women's Year, observed to remind the international community that discrimination against women continues to be a persistent problem in much of the world. The conference, along with the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) proclaimed by the General Assembly five months later, launched a new era in global efforts to promote the advancement of women by opening a worldwide dialogue on gender equality.¹³³ The Women's Year Congress, held in Istanbul in 1975, was supported by

the **Turkish National Commission for UNESCO**.

The commission facilitated the attendance of 23 women's associations in Turkey at this Congress.

Canada welcomed the 11th edition of the Gender Summit, held in Montreal in November 2017. The **Canadian Commission for UNESCO** actively supported this event. The summit attracted 675 advocates of gender equality in the areas of science, innovation, and development. Participants had fruitful discussions on the theme of "Embracing pluralism and thriving through diversity—shaping science and innovation". The commission supported a discussion paper on the non-linear careers of women in science, entitled: "The Non-Linear Paths of Women in STEM: The Barriers in the Current System of Professional Training". The paper was published in 2018 and was followed by a reflection on: "Women and post-doctorates: life after graduation," which was launched in 2021.

133 <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/mexico-city1975>



Priority Africa

Teacher training, Côte d'Ivoire, 1967.
© UN Photo

In his book “Long Walk to Freedom,” Nelson Mandela said: “Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savour their songs.”¹³⁴ By placing the focus on the African continent, through the creation of the Priority Africa across its Programmes, UNESCO aims to “translate” Africa’s hopes, dreams, culture, and visions into actions.

“Africa is rich, it is diverse, it is not only on the continent, but also outside the continent.”

*Mr Firmin Édouard Matoko,
Assistant Director-General for Priority Africa
and External relations*

Through Priority Africa, UNESCO addresses major challenges related to demographic growth, social transformation, democratic governance, sustainable development, and economic growth. It also contributes to the achievement of “Agenda 2063—The Africa We Want,” which aims for “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”.¹³⁵ More specifically, through its programmes and fields of competence, UNESCO supports the African States, the African Union, and regional communities in the implementation of policies and programmes promoting regional and continental integration.

From a policy perspective, UNESCO’s strategy for Africa focused on two overarching goals: building peace by building inclusive, peaceful, and resilient societies and building institutional capacities for sustainable development and poverty eradication. These aims are translated into six flagship programmes across sectors, involving a multitude of stakeholders and partners. These programmes focus on the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, strengthening of education systems, supporting a sustainable socio-economic development, fostering science for sustainable management of Africa’s natural resources, relying on the power of culture for sustainable development, and the promotion of an environment conducive to freedom of expression and media development.

The work of the National Commissions builds on UNESCO’s strategy, adding to its mission by reaching out to policymakers and local communities. Their active involvement is key for achieving the goals of Priority Africa.

¹³⁴ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, Back Bay Books; Illustrated edition (1 Oct. 1995)

¹³⁵ https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36205-doc-50th_anniversary_solemn_declaration_en.pdf



Online Higher Technical Education in Africa meeting of China Funds-in-Trust Phase III Project, March 2021. © UNESCO

The targeted actions taken by the National Commission of African Member States have been presented throughout this report, highlighting their outstanding contributions to advancing UNESCO's values and objectives—including Global Priority Africa. The focus in the following section falls rather on the actions taken by National Commissions in regions other than Africa in supporting this UNESCO Global Priority.

One of UNESCO's main areas of focus are the strengthening of education systems. In this context the UNESCO China Funds-in-Trust (CFIT) Project in support of Education in Africa enhances South-South cooperation in the field of education. Launched in 2012, this UNESCO-CFIT project was one of UNESCO's flagship initiatives to accelerate progress towards the Education for All and education-related Millennium Development Goals. The first phase supported eight countries (Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Namibia, Tanzania,

and Uganda) for four years, and concluded in 2016. The second phase was launched from 2017-2018 and added Togo and Zambia to the list. The third phase of the project was launched in 2019, targeting six countries. This phase focuses on higher technical education in Africa. The project, throughout its phases, proved to be very successful. Since it started in 2012, more than 100 training workshops were conducted for some 10,000 teachers. The project added over 230 teacher training modules and policy documents, seven online teaching and learning platforms and three digital libraries.

In 2013 the **National Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan for UNESCO** signed a Framework Agreement of Cooperation and established a special Trust Fund. Under this agreement several projects were implemented such as: "Promoting gender equity and equality in education in Uganda through gender-sensitive primary teacher education and training",



Participants during the projects “Empowering Girls from Pastoralists Community in Ngorongoro”. © UNESCO



UNESCO/Poland Co-Sponsored Fellowships Programme in Engineering, 2016. © UNESCO AGH Chair

“Health Literacy and Behavior Change practices among Adolescent Girls in Kibera Informal Settlements in Nairobi, Kenya”, “Empowering Girls from Pastoralists Community in Ngorongoro, Tanzania” and “Capacity development for Education for All: support to the TVET sub-sector in Liberia”. These projects combine the focus on Africa with Priority Gender Equality, as it places girls’ education at the forefront.

The **Korean National Commission for UNESCO** contributes to the enhancement of education systems in Africa by supporting the implementation of the Bridge Programme. For ten years, between 2010–2020, the programme advanced the educational rights of marginalised groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. This

initiative aimed to broaden access to education through cooperation with the National Commissions for UNESCO in the region. Due to its success, the commission launched Bridge Programme Phase 2 in 2020, continuing its cooperation with Bhutan, Laos, Timor-Leste, and Malawi. In 2021, acknowledging the impact of the Bridge initiatives, the commission set up a new programme, entitled Bridge Sejong Programme, to support the literacy activities of laureates of the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Award.¹³⁶

The creation of fellowship programmes for scholars, that would allow them to visit other research institutions around the world, was one of the earliest initiatives of UNESCO in the field of education for international understanding. The **Polish National Commission for UNESCO** contributed to this process, starting from 1958. Due to these fellowships, young researchers from other countries were hosted by the Polish educational, research and cultural institutions for a few months’ studies. Since 1995, the priority was given to African countries and its researchers. Poland also initiated a fellowship programme in engineering for Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries in 2012. Starting from 2017 the exchange includes a new programme in archaeology and conservation.

The development of libraries is key for strengthening of education systems. The **French National Commission for UNESCO** endorsed the renewal of the Library of Alexandria. The commission encouraged donations of works, including the considerable contribution of the French National Library of 500,000 works. It also supported the training of specialised staff through the awarding of scholarships and internships. Due to this cooperation, the library is now a partner of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the École normale supérieure des sciences de l’information et des bibliothèques and Senghor University in the framework of a University Diploma in online information science.

¹³⁶ UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/prizes-medals/unesco-prizes/literacy-and-teaching/unesco-king-sejong-literacy-prize/>

In this context, the commission organised a colloquium at UNESCO in 2007 on: “Recognition of prior learning: development perspectives in African countries,” and in 2015, a colloquium on: “Higher education and digital technology: what expectations of African societies,” devoted to an in-depth reflection on the prospects of training in Africa.

Since 2013, the **Swedish National Commission for UNESCO** in collaboration with Swedish International Development Agency and other Swedish government agencies, contributed to UNESCO’s work with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for young people. In 2017, UNESCO launched a three-year programme entitled: Our Rights, Our lives, Our Future (O3). The programme supports good quality comprehensive sexuality education that empowers young people. It also adds to the developing of skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to prevent HIV, reduce early and unintended pregnancies, and eliminate gender-based violence. The impact of this initiative is clear, as between 2013–2020 it reached 42 million learners, 168,000 teaching students and 131,500 teachers. An additional 30 million people were reached through community engagement and 10 million young people through different media platforms. The cooperation also resulted in the development of a technical handbook on comprehensive sexuality education.

The **Flemish Commission for UNESCO** contributes to enhancing Africa’s capacity for using heritage for sustainable development by supporting capacity-building towards natural and living heritage on the continent. In 2010, Flanders-UNESCO Funds-in-Trust focused its contribution on Africa, and since then, it has endorsed many projects within Priority Africa flagships programmes. One of the most remarkable results is the establishment of a network on intangible cultural heritage among seven Southern African countries, involving academic expertise from Flanders. They are now working closely together within a platform for safeguarding and promoting living heritages. This support, collaboration and exchanges led to an increase



Meeting in 2000 of French-speaking librarians of the Cairo library who benefited from a training grant by the French National Commission for UNESCO.
© French National Commission for UNESCO



Teacher explaining the female reproductive system. © UNESCO

in international assistance requests as well as nomination files from the region. In addition, many projects supported the management of natural World Heritage sites in Africa, for the benefit of the local population and the overall conservation. Flanders is also supporting initiatives for new African nominations and for the expansion of current World Heritage sites, in an effort to contribute to a more balanced World Heritage List.

A roundtable on “The Cultural Heritage of the Congo and the UNESCO Tangible and Intangible World Heritage Lists” was organised in October 2013. The meeting raised significant questions over the country’s



Lions at the Okavango Delta in Botswana – a World Heritage site.
© Guy Debonnet/ UNESCO



Organisers and participants of the roundtable on the place of Congo's cultural heritage on the lists of tangible and intangible World Heritage of UNESCO. @ Nicole Gesché-Koning.

heritage and recognition of its cultural diversity in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The event launched the Kinshasa Appeal followed by the publication, in 2017, of a book on the “Place of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the UNESCO World Heritage Lists”. The publication was the result of collaboration between the **National Commission for UNESCO of the Democratic Republic of Congo** and the **Belgian French-speaking and German-speaking Commission for UNESCO**, with the support of the Institute of National Museums of the Congo, the Faculty of Architecture La Cambre Horta of the Free University of Brussels, and the Wallonia-Brussels Centre in Kinshasa.

Jamaica, with the support of the **Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO**, contributes to Priority Africa through the preservation and listing of the Intangible World Heritage site of Maroon heritage of Moore Town. Moore Town is home to the descendants of independent communities of former runaway slaves known as Maroons. The African ancestors of the Moore Town Maroons were forcibly removed from their native lands to the Caribbean by Spanish slave traders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hailing from West and Central African regions with diverse languages and cultural practices, the Moore Town Maroons elaborated new collective religious ceremonies that incorporated various spiritual traditions. These expressions and practices, which were then named Kromanti Play, continue to represent the very foundation of Maroon identity. During Kromanti ceremonies, dances, songs, and specific drumming styles are performed to invoke ancestral spirits. These ceremonies also feature a language of African derivation, likewise, named Kromanti, and rare medicinal preparations.

The **Turkish National Commission for UNESCO** supports Priority Africa especially in the field of intangible cultural heritage. In 2015 it held a meeting entitled: “Intangible Cultural Heritage and Formal and Non-Formal Education: Round Table Meeting on Experience Sharing between Turkey and Africa”. The purpose of the exchange was to increase the cooperation and experience sharing with the National Commissions of the African countries, in the field of culture. The meeting became a bi-annual event, and in 2017, the “Africa—Turkey Experience Sharing Round Table Meeting: Natural, Cultural and Intangible Cultural Heritage” was held with the participation of the representatives of the National Commissions from 35 African Countries.

The **German Commission for UNESCO** has been an active supporter of UNESCO's Priority Africa through fostering of bilateral cooperation formats. The collaboration was first launched in 2008 under the Bonn Roadmap and updated in 2016 with the Seeta Agreement. It has three focus areas: strengthening the

individual capacity of African National Commissions; supporting the implementation of key UNESCO instruments in Africa (for example the World Heritage Convention or the “Man and the Biosphere” programme and most recently in 2020 and 2021 in the Covid-19 relief programme #SOSAfricanHeritage) and promoting sub-regional cooperation. The most important result of the sub-regional cooperation so far is the “Capacity Development Training Manual for UNESCO National Commissions”, which was published in 2015.

Historically, the four National Commissions for UNESCO of the German-speaking countries have cooperated since the 1950s. The success of close cooperation has led more recently to the creation of the Informal network of National Commissions of the wider region of the European Union, through strong support from the German Commission for UNESCO.

In 2018, the Government of Canada officially recognised the UN International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024). Following this recognition, the **Canadian Commission for UNESCO** committed to several initiatives, such as special funding to local community supports for Black youth, and culturally sensitive mental health initiatives in Black communities. The commission also mandated the Canadian Advisory Committee for Memory of the World to advance nominations relating to Black history and heritage. In an effort to highlight the voices of people of African descent, the commission supported the issuing of a two-part special edition of *Canadian Diversity* magazine. The edition is a forum for Black Canadian leaders, researchers, and thinkers to express the achievements, histories, concerns, and aspirations of people of African descent in Canada.



Moore Town basketmaking. © Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO



Entrepreneurship training in Uganda 2012. © Universität Lüneburg

Conclusion

Anniversaries are moments of commemoration and reflection. Confucius said: “Study the past if you would define the future.” UNESCO’s past is a reflection of its strength and resilience in a world that changed dramatically in the last 75 years. It bears witness to an organisation that understood its mission and its purpose.

Some said that UNESCO’s birth came in a utopic moment,¹³⁷ in which a world shook by one of its most devastating conflicts, decided that “peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”.¹³⁸ UNESCO’s constitution gathers both the concerns and the ambition of those who saw in the new organisation a way of inspiring its member states to share this vision of solidarity.

Thus, this anniversary is more than an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments—it is an endeavor to rekindle the sense of hope in creating that intellectual and moral solidarity through the work of the National Commissions.

The stories and histories presented here demonstrate the power of international cooperation as a solution in addressing very contemporary challenges. All contributions are essential, since each in its turn, make a difference for their communities. The transformational power of UNESCO rests on the actions of its member states. The network of National Commissions magnifies UNESCO’s work at the local, regional, and global level.

The key aspect of this publication is not to be an exhaustive list, but to delineate impact. It aims to demonstrate the many ways in which close collaboration brought about a different awareness of the environment, and of each other. The stories follow people, events, and projects around the world, charting the individual actions of the National Commissions in fulfilling their mandate to build “peace and security and the common welfare of mankind by participating in the activities of UNESCO”.¹³⁹

The experience and expertise of the National Commissions is invaluable for UNESCO’s future, since a transversal approach can be only established through the support of its member states.

The world’s expectation of UNESCO is high, especially at this moment of crossroads. In the words of Thomas Paine, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” This endeavor will only become a reality with the support of the National Commissions.

¹³⁷ Glenda Sluga, “UNESCO and the (One) World of Julien Huxley,” *Journal of World History*, Vol. 21, No. 3, University of Hawai’i Press, 2010.

¹³⁸ UNESCO Constitution, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

¹³⁹ 1980 21 C/Resolution 7.13 Co-operation with National Commissions

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The stories highlighted in this publication follow a sinuous path around the globe, moving from country to country and focusing on different regions and people that demonstrate the wide-ranging impact of UNESCO's National Commissions. The many initiatives presented here, organised under UNESCO's fields of competence, show the impressive dynamic they generate. Eighty National Commissions provided input and contributed to this result.

One of this book's crucial aims is to create a new narrative, uniting all National Commissions in a family portrait, to celebrate UNESCO's 75th anniversary. Thus, the contributions received were adapted to fit this outline, while maintaining their key messages and ideas. In this light, we sought to ensure coherence and consistency to dispel possible lack of clarity, to smooth transitions, all the while preserving the focus of the many reports received. These changes were important for creating overall harmonisation and contextualisation, while keeping the original meaning and intention of the authors. This unity-in-diversity approach led to adjustments to ensure consistency, while maintaining the core message of each National Commission. This was a creative endeavor, which placed the network of National Commissions not just at the centre of UNESCO's work, but also within the United Nations' ecosystem.

The photos accompanying this publication are important in themselves. They illustrate the story of intense international cooperation and knowledge exchange spanning over 75 years. Along with the pictures sent by the National Commissions, the Secretariat drew on the resources of the UNESCO Archive, especially to cover the earlier decades.

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List of acronyms

AfriMAB	African Network of Biosphere Reserves
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIESEE	International Association of South-East European Studies
APCEIU	Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding
ASPnet	UNESCO Associated Schools Network
BEAR	Better Education for Africa's Rise
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARIMAC	Caribbean School of Media and Communication
CERN	European Organisation for Nuclear Research
CESA	Continental Strategy for Education in Africa
CFIT	UNESCO China Funds-in-Trust
CLEF	French Coordination of the European Women's Lobby
CMC	Community Multimedia Centres
COMEST	World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology
CSK	Cooperative Study of the Kuroshio and Adjacent Regions (Republic of Korea)
DAWReK'n	Dynamic Actions for Women in Research and Knowledge (Lebanese Republic)
DLIS	Department of Library and Information Service (Jamaica)
EABRN	East Asian Biosphere Reserve Network
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDA	End of Decade Assessment (Republic of Kenya)
EFA	Education for All
EIU	Education for International Understanding
ENCATC	European Network on Cultural Management and policy
ENVIS	Non-Violent Students of the Sobrequés Institute (Spain)
EPE	Entrepreneurship Education
ERAIFT	Regional Post-Graduate School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ETCAP	Emergency Technical Cooperation Assistance Programme
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FBACU	Beninese Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations
FFA	Education 2030 Framework for Action
FRIN	Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria
GCED	Global Citizenship Education
GCOS	Global Climate Observing System
GEBR	Green Economy in Biosphere Research Methodology
GITEWS	German-Indonesian Tsunami Early Warning System for the Indian Ocean
IAC	International Advisory Committee
IBC	International Bioethics Committee
IBSP	International Basic Sciences Programme
ICCAR	International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
ICIReWaRD	International Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on the Dynamics of Water Systems (France)
ICOMOS	International Council on Antiquities and Sites
ICSSR	Indian Council for Social Science Research
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAP	Information for All Programme
IFCD	International Fund for Cultural Diversity
IHP	Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IIOE	International Indian Ocean Expedition
IM2E	Montpellier Institute for Water and the Environment (France)
IOC-UNESCO	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IODE	International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPDC	International Programme for the Development of Communication
JCIC	Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage
JFIT	UNESCO Japanese Funds-in-Trust
KOC	Korean Oceanographic Commission

LBD	Looking Beyond Disaster (New Zealand)
LIKS	Lithuanian Computer Association
LINKS	UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme
MAB	Man and the Biosphere Programme
MDIs	Media Development Indicators
MedLiHer	Mediterranean Living Heritage Project
MGIEP	Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development
MIL	Media Information Literacy
MINEPS	International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport
MoE	Ministry of Education (Republic of Maldives)
MOEYI	Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (Jamaica)
MOST	Intergovernmental Programme for Management of Social Transformations
MoW	Memory of the World International Register
NCSR-L	National Council for Scientific Research Lebanon
NEAP	National Education Action Plan (Republic of Sierra Leone)
NF	National Federation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIE	Institute of Education (Republic of Maldives)
NMEC	National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation
O3	Our Rights, Our lives, Our Future (Sweden)
OBIS	Ocean Biodiversity Information System
ODIN	Ocean Data and Information Networks
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PACE	Pan African Conference on Education
PALOP	Portuguese-speaking African Countries
PHES	Pacific Heads of Education System
PHI-NADO	Philippine National Anti-Doping Organisation
PMA	Pitons Management Areas (Saint Lucia)
PSSC	Philippine Social Science Council
PVE-E	Preventing violent extremism through education
RICAA	International Network for Indigenous Audiovisual Creation (Canada)
ROAM	Rights, Openness, Accessibility, Multi-stakeholder participation

RTRC	Regional Training and Research Centre
RTRC-ODC	UNESCO/IOC Regional Training and Research Centre on Ocean Dynamic and Climate (People's Republic of China)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SESAME	Synchrotron- Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
TMIS	Teacher Management Information System
TTISSA	Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa
TUBITAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey
TVET	Technical and Vocational Training
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UIL	UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDESD	UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development
UNEVOC	UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNITWIN	University Twinning and Networking Programme
UNESWA	University of Eswatini
UPN	Université Pédagogique Nationale (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
VLIZ	Flanders Marine Institute
WCRP	World Climate Research Programme
WITFOR	World Information Technology Forum
WNG	World Nomad Games
WWAP	World Water Assessment Programme

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