



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# UNESCO DAKAR ACTIONS

A brief introduction to the priorities of UNESCO's Regional Office in Dakar



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# Africa: UNESCO's Priority



**Priority Africa is UNESCO's overall framework to guide the Organization's work on the continent. Our vision is to promote the building of peace through inclusive and resilient societies, and to ensure institutional capacities for sustainable development and poverty eradication.**

The concept of Priority Africa is based on the Africa Union 2063 Agenda, which promotes "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena."

UNESCO is working with African countries and development partners to tackle five major challenges:

- **Demographic growth**
- **Social transformation**
- **Democratic governance**
- **Resilience and sustainable development**
- **Human resource development**

This is done through the work of the five programme sectors: Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, and Communication & Information.



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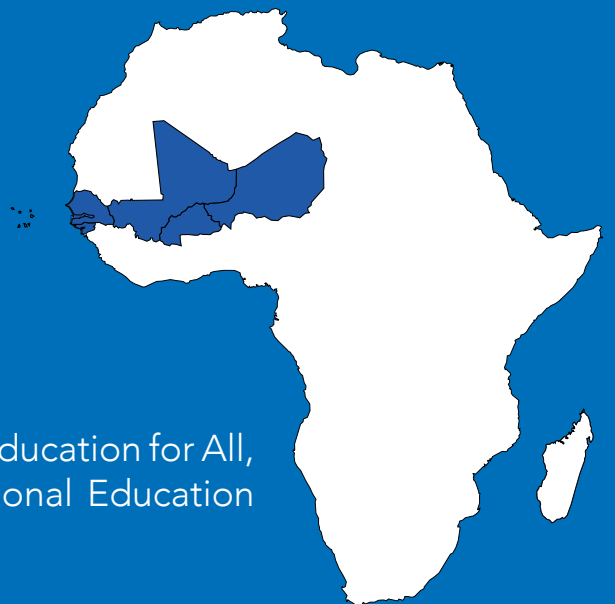
## Our target countries

UNESCO's Regional Office in Dakar covers seven countries in West Africa: Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. It also reaches beyond these countries, particularly in the context of sub-regional projects with such institutions as ECOWAS and UEMOA.

Across the region, UNESCO Dakar coordinates Education for All, sector-wide planning, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

## Our challenge

West Africa, in particular the Sahel countries, is one of the world's poorest and most fragile regions. It faces simultaneously the challenges of extreme poverty, the effects of climate change, frequent food crises, rapid population growth, corruption, unresolved internal tensions, the risk of violent extremism, illicit trafficking, and terrorist-linked security threats.



## Our focus

**UNESCO's response is to work through a multisectoral and inter-disciplinary approach that promotes the enablers of peace and sustainable development, namely the principles of justice and equal rights.**



We work to advance these enablers in every human institution and by every human person, which is why creating synergies among development actors and engaging in cutting-edge discussions continue to be one of UNESCO's trademarks.

Our action focuses on five action areas: education, culture, natural sciences, human and social sciences, and communication. Combining this wide range of expertise constitutes our value added. We influence and support government policies, conduct research, and promote innovations through grants and pilot projects. We see ourselves as catalysts, empowering all levels of societies. We know that only together with governments and our partners, in particular the UN, technical and financial partners and civil society, we will be able to ensure tangible and sustainable impact.



## **UNESCO's action in Africa revolves around six flagship projects:**

- **Promoting a culture of peace and non-violence**
- **Strengthening education systems for sustainable development in Africa: improving equity, quality, and relevance**
- **Harnessing Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) and knowledge for the sustainable socio-economic development of Africa**
- **Fostering science for the sustainable management of Africa's natural resources and disaster risk reduction**
- **Harnessing the power of culture for sustainable development and peace in a context of regional integration**
- **Promoting an environment conducive to freedom of expression and media development**



# Accelerating Education for All



## **Our goal: All children, youth, and adults enjoy their right to education**

Education is not only a human right. It is an enabler for realizing other rights and hence a cornerstone in building sustainable societies across Africa.

UNESCO Dakar is leading an ambitious push to support sub-Saharan African countries to move ahead with their post-2015 Education for All agenda and accelerate efforts with urgent and strategic actions. This is being done through the mobilization of stronger political and financial commitments at the country, regional, and global levels.

The Big Push initiative was launched in February 2013, and 14 countries have signed up including Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Niger, and Senegal.

UNESCO Dakar offers an Acceleration Framework for Education for All that allows each country to prioritize its goals. These efforts reinforce existing National Education Plans, adding value through a rigorous prioritization exercise to choose strategic actions with immediate impact. The national initiative is always supported by the President, Prime Minister, Education Minister, or the Permanent Secretary.

# Promising innovations in literacy



**UNESCO Dakar is initiating and promoting innovations to inspire governments and development partners to tackle education challenges differently.**

## Using technology to increase interest in learning

UNESCO's experience in Senegal shows that mobile phones, computers, internet, and TV make literacy courses much more attractive for illiterate women. This allows women to improve their literacy and IT skills, and also provides them with vocational and life skills training. Selected classrooms are now equipped with digital Sankoré kits (interactive whiteboards), which also include adapted software, designed to encourage greater participation and retention of knowledge thus promoting an active learning approach. Currently, UNESCO Dakar is working with other countries in the region (Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau) to build on this experience.

## Telling children stories about serious topics

The children's book series *Bouba & Zaza* breaks the silence of topics such as AIDS, violation of the physical integrity of children, and war-induced trauma that traditionally receive little attention in traditional school curricula in Africa. The series includes 15 booklets and is a primary example of knowledge production in Africa. It's available in English, French, and Portuguese, as well as a number of African languages including Fulani, Hausa, Kiswahili, and Yoruba. It has also been adapted to a North African audience in Arabic.



# Teachers are key!

**The acute shortage of qualified teachers has been identified as one of the biggest challenges of achieving Education for All. Africa needs qualified teachers as ever before due to the growth in the number of school-age children on the continent.**



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## Providing support to teachers

UNESCO Dakar is leading capacity-building projects for teachers in Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, and Senegal, which improve countries' institutional and organizational capacities to design and implement training programmes for teacher trainers and supervisors, develop and review of teacher-related policies, and contribute to knowledge production and sharing on teaching.

In Mali, the programme supports the development of a teacher training and professional development strategy to feed in the next 10-year Education Sector Plan preparation process. In Burkina Faso and Niger, where governments have adopted curriculum reform for extended basic education, the programmes are supporting the roll-out process focusing on teachers' training and management systems. In Senegal, the programme focuses on literacy and non-formal education, and aims to establish a national teachers' training system for basic education that would also provide training for literacy and non-formal education personnel. In Guinea-Bissau, UNESCO's teacher training project supports the harmonization of teacher training modules for government's education emergency plan to train some 4,000 teachers and principals.

Another important focus is the development of national and regional qualification frameworks for teachers in West African states. This initiative aims to facilitate the definition of professional standards and clear academic and professional pathways as key elements for the recognition of teaching as a full-fledged profession and teachers' mobility across countries.



# Promoting Regional Integration

## **Connecting universities in West Africa through IT platforms**

The eight member states of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) are implementing a reform of the Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate levels (LMD reform in French). The aim is a higher education system that meets international standards and allows for mobility within the region.

To support this process, UNESCO Dakar is coordinating a project entitled "*Projet d'Appui au Développement par les Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication pour le renforcement de la qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur*" (PADTICE) to back the implementation of IT systems and platforms to improve management and knowledge sharing within and between 8 major universities in the 8 UEMOA countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo).

A sub-regional virtual library is being created to allow universities to pool together their resources for greater impact. Also, a set of software applications is under development to manage attendance of students, online publications, and print-on-demand services.

## **Promoting peace education throughout West Africa**

UNESCO Dakar plays a lead role in the promotion of human rights, citizenship, democracy, and regional integration that aims to instill the values of peace in West Africa. We have been working with partners since 2006 and have developed a Reference Manual with ECOWAS on education for a culture of peace, human rights, citizenship, democracy, and regional integration. It is available in English, French, and 31 local languages.

Also, an online self-study course ([www.educationalapaix-ao.org](http://www.educationalapaix-ao.org)) is available in French, English, and Portuguese. Both the Reference Manual and the course are being promoted in the sub-region through DVDs and flash drives to reach out to a broad audience.

A specific effort is being made by the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and UNESCO Dakar to target youth in Burkina Faso and Mali. This initiative contributes to activities under the United Nations joint initiative to build resilience in the Sahel due to terrorism in the north of Mali.

# Tapping into the potential of youth



**The demand for work in Africa is enormous. Three out of five unemployed in sub-Saharan Africa are young people, mostly surviving in the informal economy with no formal education.**

## **Boosting youth employment**

Today's youth has the potential to make a tremendous difference in Africa's development. All they need is quality education, entrepreneurial skills, opportunities, and competencies.

UNESCO Dakar works to keep Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) high on the political agenda of African governments, regional economic communities, and financial partners. TVET is being promoted to facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications gained in the non-formal sector and ensure mobility between countries in the sub-region. A series of videos produced by UNESCO Dakar showcases successful examples of youth training in Benin, Nigeria, and Senegal. In Mali, technical and vocational education and training is being offered to youth in the conflict-affected regions of Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal. UNESCO Dakar has also been instrumental in developing a common format for TVET curricula and learning materials for West African countries.

## **Advancing the creative economy**

UNESCO works with the Government of Cabo Verde and the UN country team conducting studies on topics such as World Heritage, Tourism, and Creative Entrepreneurship, and is developing a joint program on youth creative entrepreneurship with ILO, which explores new approaches to promote youth employment within Africa's creative economy.

# Fostering social inclusion



**Today, West African countries are undergoing profound social transformations, opening vast new opportunities for inclusive development.**

## **Adapting policies for social inclusion**

UNESCO Dakar is working with governments in several Sahel countries including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to promote social inclusion as a central element for governmental policies and planning processes. We are building capacities in these countries to ensure that relevant policies and reforms take into account gender equality and the human rights-based approach. For example, in Burkina Faso we provide backing to centres that provide support and work to end the exclusion of women accused of witchcraft.

Another example of efforts to promote inclusion is a project of youth-led social innovation in Senegal (YouthActionNet Senegal). Executed by the International Youth Foundation (IYF), this intervention aims to strengthen the capacity of young entrepreneurs. Training is available on social innovations, and the “West Africa Research Center” (WARC), partner organization in Senegal, has already led the selection of the best initiatives of young social innovators.

## **The links between migration and development**

UNESCO is publishing a selection of case studies on the impact of changing environments on migration in Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire. The studies promote multidisciplinary social science research and intercultural dialogue in support of policies on social transformations and social inclusion in West Africa.



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## Protecting heritage & promoting creativity

UNESCO is providing financial and technical support to countries in West Africa in order to ensure that their World Heritage sites are promoted and protected for future generations. Specifically, UNESCO Dakar is working to raise awareness about the 18 World Heritage sites located in the seven countries covered by the Office.

Awareness-raising on heritage protection is critical in Mali where we are endorsing and promoting a passport of Malian heritage. In addition, for the first time in a context of crisis management, the peace keeping mission of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is being trained to understand cultural heritage protection issues.

### **Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage**

Programmes are in development throughout the region in a first comprehensive effort to safeguard the rich intangible cultural heritage of West Africa. We carry out needs assessment in the Gambia, build capacities to carry out community-based inventories in Cabo Verde and Niger, and provide technical assistance in Burkina Faso and Mali. Senegal has recently adopted safeguarding plans for traditional music as part of the traditional music inventory carried out with UNESCO's assistance, and several countries saw elements of their intangible cultural heritage newly inscribed on the Representative List, including the 'Coming forth of the masks and puppets in Markala' (Mali), the practices and expressions of joking relationships in Niger, and 'Xooy' divination ceremony of the Serer of Senegal.

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## The fight against illicit trafficking

Protecting heritage in West Africa, especially the Sahel, faces numerous threats of illicit trafficking of cultural property. The Dakar Office works to support capacity building for the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property by raising awareness, working with our partners to return stolen objects, and fighting fraudulent transactions over the internet.

## Fostering the creative sector

Activities focus on building institutional capacity, providing technical assistance and policy advice, as well as improving professional and expert networks. As part of the follow-up of the MDG-F programme "Promoting cultural industries and initiatives in Senegal" UNESCO is supporting the development of a new generation of interpretation centres including the one in Bandafassi (Bassari country), which was officially inaugurated by President Macky Sall in 2014.

In Niger, UNESCO works with the Government and the Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF) in a joint program to strengthen cultural industries. Activities have focused on training the Centre national de cinématographie and leadership development within the Agency for the Promotion of Cultural Enterprises and Industries. In Burkina Faso, where 2,1% of the active population works in culture, the results of the new UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators provide innovative policy support and establish a baseline for areas of growth and opportunity.



# Mobilizing science knowledge and policy for sustainable development

## Development of water policies in the Sahel region

The chronic depopulation of communities in the Sahel Region due to drought, conflicts, and other natural disasters requires more collaboration and assistance regarding policy and innovative approaches for the management of water. Under the UN Sahel Strategy, the Dakar Office heads the sub-component on water management (surface/underground). We also support Sahel region experts to



attend international meetings and trainings to ensure that they have the required knowledge and competencies to address national issues regarding water policies.

## Development of ICT-based Geology Open Online Courses

A new initiative lead by UNESCO Dakar will provide online instruction to augment materials available to teachers of geology and other geoscience courses in West African universities. The project entitled GELOOC-WA aims to provide quality graduate-level courses that reflect the latest state of the art in science, applied to and drawn from the specific geological problems found in the sub-region.

## Man and Biosphere

UNESCO contributes to enhancing the work of AfriMAB in the management of biosphere reserves in Africa. AfriMAB members in the countries covered by the UNESCO Office are supported in achieving the goals and recommendations agreed upon at the Accra MaB General Assembly of 2013. UNESCO Dakar also supports the revision and updating of management plans for biosphere reserves in the Sahel region as part of its contribution towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Accra Recommendations and the updated Madrid Action Plans.



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## Building inclusive knowledge societies

### **Empowering people through access to information**

UNESCO works to foster free, independent, and pluralistic media in print, broadcast, and online. In order to empower individuals and communities as producers and consumers of information, we promote freedom of press, safety of journalists, establishment of community media, information literacy, and journalism education. UNESCO Dakar also advises on the development of media laws in Senegal and provides similar support through an EU-funded project in the Gambia.

UNESCO is promoting community radios as a tool to facilitate social communication and support democratic processes within societies. What makes a community radio so powerful is its potential to reach out to people with little or no access to information. It is an efficient tool for educating and informing villagers about critical issues such as health, education, and sustainable development. Community radios are also being used to promote oral traditions. In addition, UNESCO Dakar is supporting the international network of women in community radios.

We provide training to journalists in issues related to climate change, human rights, and gender-based violence. Currently, we are focusing on training female journalists to cater to specific needs in all areas of development.

UNESCO celebrates World Press Freedom Day in order to mobilize media, ensure freedom of expression in all media, and that all can speak without fear. We set up dialogues with policy-makers in effort to press these issues.

### **Leading knowledge sharing innovations in Africa**

The Dakar Office is leading innovation in knowledge sharing to improve programme delivery throughout UNESCO's offices in Africa. This involves the launch of an online knowledge sharing toolkit entitled "CONNECT-U," along with training workshops for team-building, collaboration, and knowledge management.



## UNESCO's Regional Office in Dakar

UNESCO's Regional Office in Dakar was created in 1970 as the Regional Bureau for Education in Africa, initially to deal with educational planning in sub-Saharan Africa. Today, UNESCO Dakar's mandate has changed and it is now a multi-sectoral Office focusing its support in education, culture, sciences, and communication in the seven Cluster countries. Currently, UNESCO Dakar employs a total of 40 staff members.

Multi-sectoral Regional Office for West Africa (Sahel): Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal.

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