



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Address by Irina Bokova,  
Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the GEM-TECH 2014 Award for “Women in African History: An E-Learning  
Tool”**

**UNESCO, 29 October 2014**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yesterday, on my behalf, the Deputy Director-General of UNESCO was in Busan, Republic of Korea, to receive the GEM-TECH Award, from UN Women and ITU, in recognition of UNESCO's efforts to empower girls and women through new information and communication technologies.

*“Nobody tells the story that African women are at the forefront of development.”*

These are the words of Dr Nkopsazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

This is precisely the goal of UNESCO's “Women in African History: An E-Learning Tool” – to tell this story, drawing on the full potential of new technologies.

This E-Learning Tool brings together so much that is essential to UNESCO...

...our two Global Priorities, Africa and Gender Equality.

...the use of new information and communication technologies, including Open Educational Resources, for quality learning, linking technology with heritage and local content, knowledge and history...

This fits into the UNESCO flagship, the *General History of Africa*, and our work to take forward the *Pedagogical Use of the General History of Africa*.

This E-Learning Tool is an opportunity to celebrate the women who have shaped Africa, and who, in so doing, have changed the world.

The first phase of this E-Learning project has identified nine such women -- from Africa and its Diaspora, from all periods.

Each of them tells a story of resistance to tyranny and the struggle for human rights and dignity, for the empowerment of girls and women.

This story is told through an internet platform that consists of multimedia content, including comic strips, interactive pedagogical units, audio modules, and quizzes – all of this to share knowledge, to promote ICT skills, especially for young women, to counter stereotypes, to deepen mutual respect.

The result is a platform for innovation -- through the perspective of one continent, over a period spanning seven million years, the E-Learning Tool opens up a vast history of ideas, traditions, and cultures.

The first phase of this project is available in English and French -- it will be available next year in Arabic and several African languages, including Swahili and Dioula.

All of this fits with UNESCO's close collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union, and with UN Women, on the ground as well as through the *UNESCO Mobile Learning Week* to be held in February 2015.

I wish to thank the Government of Bulgaria for generously supporting this E-Learning Tool.

In closing, let me cite the words of Amanuella Alemayehu Mengiste -- a secondary school student in Addis Ababa, who, with her friends in Ethiopia, has been using and sharing the tool on mobile phones and computers, downloading the digital comic strips, and reciting the songs and stories from the audio modules.

She said:

*“The more stories you hear about women who are doing stuff on their own and following their dreams and doing what they want to do – I think it’s inspirational. Whenever someone says ‘oh no you can’t do this,’ you can point to that woman and say ‘well she did it, so why can’t I?’”*

I close here, because Amanuella has said it all...