



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



# *The Slave Route*

*Reconciling the duty to remember  
and historical truth*





## Why is UNESCO taking action?

- Because UNESCO was entrusted with the mandate of helping to build “the defences of peace in the minds of men” through international cooperation in its fields of competence, namely education, the sciences, culture and communication.
- Because, as a specialized agency of the United Nations system, UNESCO is responsible for contributing to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue.
- Because the interactions generated by *the slave trade and slavery* foster the rapprochement of cultures and the building of new identities and illustrate dialogue and cultural pluralism.

## The origins of the project

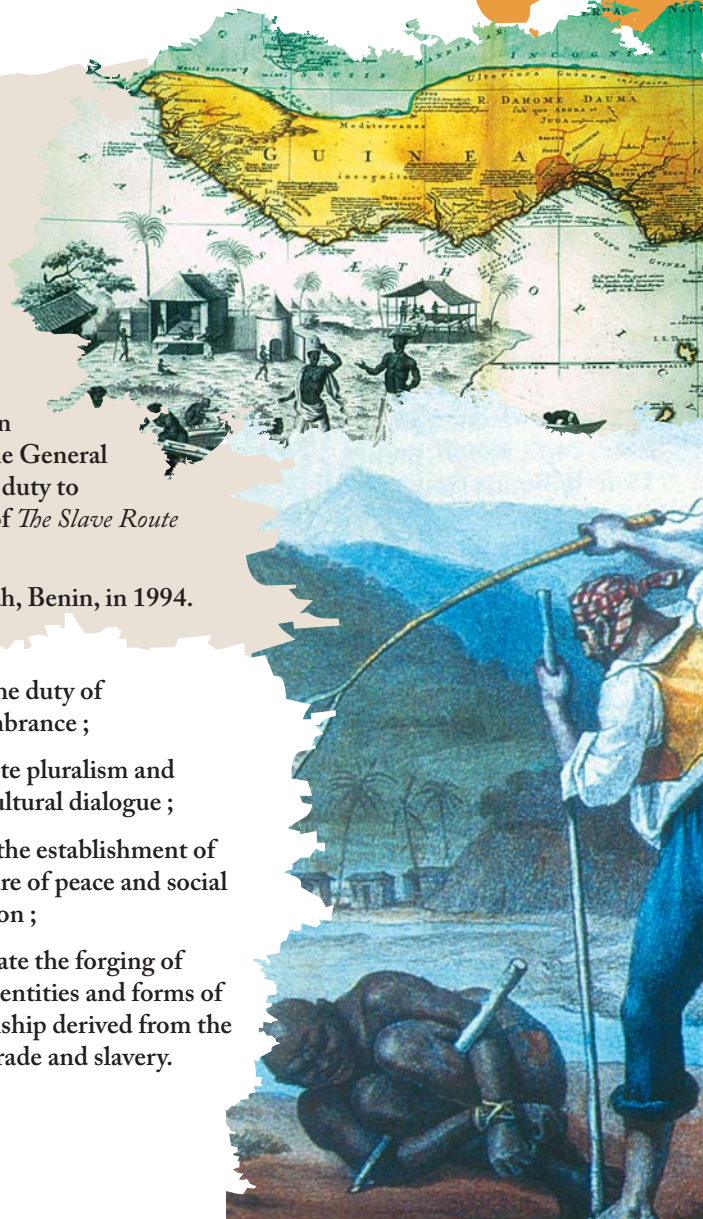
- It is the culmination of a long reflection about the duty to remember in order to break the silence over one of humanity’s greatest tragedies.
- It was at the proposal of Haiti and of African countries that, at its 27th session in 1993, the General Conference of UNESCO responded to this duty to remember by approving the establishment of *The Slave Route* project (27 C/Resolution 3.13).
- The project was officially launched in Ouidah, Benin, in 1994.

## What does the project seek to achieve?

In cooperation with the international community, UNESCO is helping to:

- establish the historical truth about that tragedy;

- fulfil the duty of remembrance;
- promote pluralism and intercultural dialogue;
- foster the establishment of a culture of peace and social cohesion;
- stimulate the forging of new identities and forms of citizenship derived from the slave trade and slavery.



## *Its objectives*

- To break the silence over the tragedy of the slave trade and slavery in the various parts of the world, by improving knowledge of its scope, underlying causes, issues and modus operandi through multidisciplinary scientific works;
- To highlight the effects of the slave trade and slavery on contemporary societies and, in particular, the multiple transformations and cultural heritages that this tragedy has engendered;
- To contribute to mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among peoples, in particular by promoting reflection about the prejudices inherited from slavery, intercultural dialogue, cultural pluralism and the building of new citizenships in modern societies.



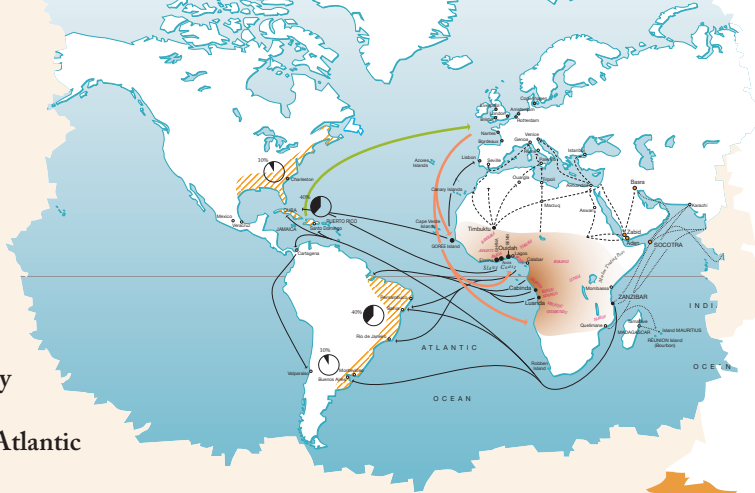
## *Its principal fields of action*

- Developing multidisciplinary scientific research into the various aspects of the slave trade and slavery and their consequences in modern societies.
- Producing teaching materials and curricula in order to strengthen the teaching of this tragedy at all levels of education;
- Inventorying, preserving and promoting memorial places, sites and buildings linked to the slave trade and slavery in order to develop remembrance tourism.
- Promoting the living cultures and the artistic and spiritual expressions emerging from interactions generated by the slave trade and slavery.
- Collecting and preserving written archives and oral traditions linked to the slave trade and slavery.



# *Its new fields of action*

A new strategy has been devised for the project in order to extend its activities to other regions of the world on the subject and develop relatively unexplored themes, while at the same time strengthening its activities regarding the trans-Atlantic slave trade



## *1. Expansion to other geographical regions*

- Indian Ocean
- Arab-Muslim world
- Asia and the Pacific
- Andean America

## *2. New research into other themes*

- Psychological consequences of slavery
- Transfer of knowledge and skills from Africa to the rest of the world
- Combating racial prejudices and racism inherited from this history

# *Project structure*

## *International Scientific Committee*

An advisory body to UNESCO, it guarantees an objective and consensual approach to the project's lines of actions and the conduct of its activities. It is composed of 20 members representing the various parts of the world and scientific disciplines.

## *National Committees*

There have been established in several countries. Their mission is to mobilize and involve at local level the major actors concerned with this issue (researchers, public authorities, universities, civil society, research institutes, etc.)

## *Project Secretariat*

The project is intersectoral in intention and its Secretariat is located in the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, Culture Sector. It is tasked with coordinating and implementing the project. It also ensures liaison with members of the Scientific Committee and the National Committees.

# Financing of the project

The project is financed by:

- UNESCO's regular budget
- Extrabudgetary funds made available to the project by UNESCO Member States
- Public- and private-sector partners (institutions, foundations, etc.).



## Its achievements

### 1. Placing the slave trade and slavery on the international agenda

- Contribution to the recognition of slavery as a "crime against humanity" by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, South Africa, 2001).
- Proclamation of 23 August as International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.
- Proclamation of 2004 as International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition in celebration of the bicentenary of the Haitian revolution (the first victory of slaves over their oppressors).
- Contribution to the proclamation of national remembrance days.
- Establishment of National "Slave Route" Committees (Cuba, Haiti, Benin, Portugal, Mexico, Ghana, etc.).

### 2. Development of knowledge about the issue

- Production of scientific studies and research into its various aspects.
- Publication of scientific works and documents aimed at the public at large.
- Establishment of networks of scientific institutions (Latin America, Caribbean, Arab-Muslim World, Indian Ocean, Americas, Europe, etc.).
- Organization of symposia, seminars and other meetings (Ouidah, Lisbon, Palermo, Libreville, Goa, Rabat and Marrakesh, etc.).
- Preparation of teaching and information material (Tell me about the Slave Trade; Il fut une fois à Gorée: l'esclavage raconté aux enfants [Once upon a time in Gorée: telling children about slavery]; The Middle Passage; Del olvido a la memoria [from forgetfulness to memory], etc.).

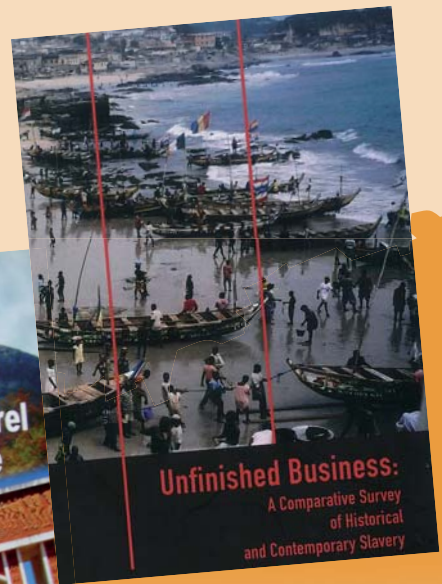
### 3. Awareness-raising among the public at large

- Identification, safeguarding and use of written and oral archives.
- Inventorying sites and places of memory with a view to developing commemorative itineraries.
- Support for the establishment and promotion of museums of slavery around the world.
- Production of an instructive and educational documentary film titled: "The Slave Routes: a Global Vision" which aim is to deliver an universal message on peace, knowledge and tolerance about these events
- Organization of exhibitions, festivals and concerts.
- Establishment of a website: [www.unesco.org/culture/slaveroute](http://www.unesco.org/culture/slaveroute)



# Chief current activities

- Development of an “Atlas of Interactions and of the African Diaspora”, a multidimensional map highlighting the African presence in the world through various themes (tangible heritage, languages and oral and artistic expressions, music and musical instruments, religions and forms of spirituality, science and technologies [skills, etc.]);
- Research into the psychological consequences of slavery: analysis of the psychological repercussions on populations of African descent and on the descendants of slave-traders;
- Development of memorial tourism to promote itineraries to the key sites of slavery and the slave trade;
- Initiation of scientific studies in little-explored regions (Indian Ocean, Andean America, Asia and the Pacific and the Arab-Muslim world).



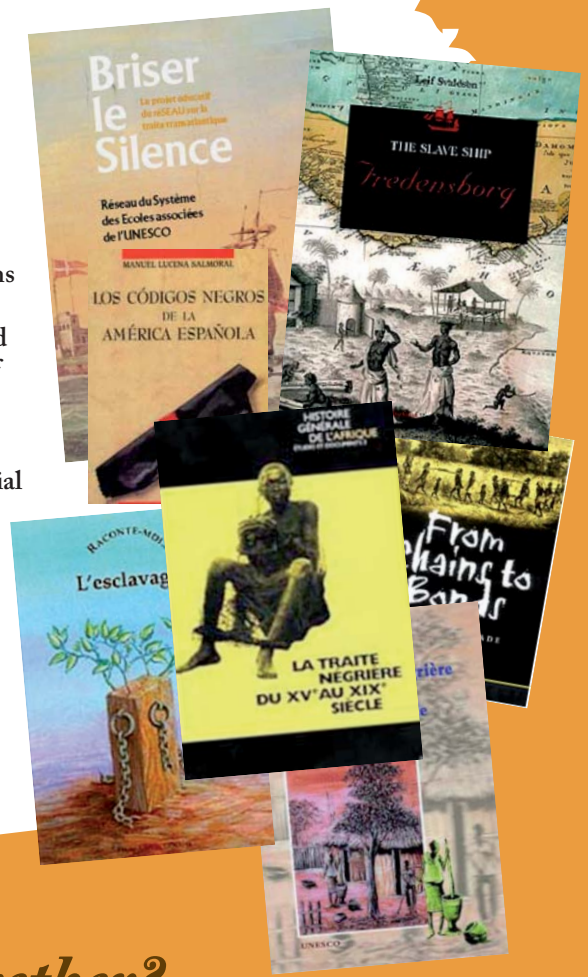
# Publications

Some 20 works have already been published, notably in the UNESCO Collection entitled “Memory of Peoples - The Slave Route”, which aims to inform the public about the results initiated by UNESCO and its partners in order to spread knowledge of specialists’ debates on the issue of the slave trade and its consequences.

A large number of works have been published with UNESCO’s intellectual, moral and financial support.

Their references are available on the project website and some of these publications are available free of charge: [www.unesco.org/culture/slaveroute](http://www.unesco.org/culture/slaveroute)

The new publication policy is to put on line all works created as part of *The Slave Route* project.



## How can we act together?

*The Slave Route* project encourages and supports programmes and activities that contribute towards achieving its objectives throughout the world, in particular by:

- ▶ granting the “Slave Route” label to support projects and other initiatives that match the selection criteria in force at UNESCO (see the project website);
- ▶ coordinating and publicizing activities organized in commemoration of 23 August: *International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition* (entering them in the Annual Calendar of Events relating to the commemoration and hosting them on the project website);
- ▶ supplying travelling exhibitions on the history of the slave trade and slavery, subject to availability;
- ▶ announcing and participating in major scheduled events on this theme round the world;
- ▶ involving members of the International Scientific Committee in projects and activities at national, regional or international level.



## *Contact us*

Any person or institution wishing to take part in activities of *The Slave Route* project is requested to contact:

1. Your country's National Commission for UNESCO
2. The UNESCO office that covers your country
3. The project secretariat at the following address:

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