TEACHING THE HISTORY OF GENOCIDE AND MASS ATROCITIES:

AN ENTRY POINT FOR EDUCATION FOR PEACE

A capacity-building workshop for Education Policy-Makers of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Mali, Niger and Senegal

24-25 November 2016, Dakar, Senegal

In partnership with the National Commission of Senegal for UNESCO, the Ministry of Education of Senegal, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, the South African Holocaust and Genocide Foundation and the Shoah Memorial

With the support of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah

REPORT
Background of the workshop

Education has a vital role to play in building resilience to violence by fostering a culture of prevention of genocide, reducing prejudices, promoting peaceful co-existence and the values of diversity and cultivating respect for all peoples. In that regard, the importance of educating teaching about genocide as a means to raise awareness about the underpinnings of violence - and thus live up to the promise of "never again" - has been acknowledged repeatedly.

The United Nations General Assembly resolution (A/RES/60/7, 1 November 2005) on “Holocaust Remembrance” urges Member States “to develop educational programmes that will inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust in order to help prevent future genocide.” Likewise, the subsequent UNESCO General Conference resolution 34C/61 (2007) on “Holocaust Remembrance” asks UNESCO to promote “awareness of Holocaust remembrance through education” and to combat “all forms of Holocaust denial” in accordance with previous United Nations resolutions. More recently, the United Nations Security Council, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, called for recommitment to fight against genocide through resolution 2150 (2014), which emphasized “the particular importance of all forms of education in order to prevent the commission of future genocides” and to develop relevant education programmes. In that regard, the report of the United Nations Secretary General (A/67/929-S/2013/399, 9 July 2013) on The Responsibility to Protect: State Responsibility and Prevention states that “education curriculums should include instruction on past violations and on the causes, dynamics and consequences of atrocity crimes.”

In this framework, UNESCO provides interested Member States with technical support to include the related subjects in school curricula and build national capacity to teach about genocide and other mass atrocities, in keeping with the particular needs and specific historical, cultural and social contexts of countries concerned. UNESCO’s work in the field is embedded into the Organization’s efforts to promote Global Citizenship Education (GCED). GCED aims to empower learners to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world. In this respect, teaching and learning about the Holocaust, as well as other instances of genocide in history, is considered as a contribution to the implementation of the Education 2030 Agenda, notably Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4.7) on Education. SDG 4.7 calls on countries to “ensure that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills 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.”

The workshop was part of a series of national and regional initiatives implemented by UNESCO and its partners in the sub-Saharan Africa region. This included the following activities:

- September 2012, Cape Town, South Africa: consultation with several countries of the region (Benin, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Namibia, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia) in order to establish a set of priorities and garner the support of several Member States of the region
- September 2014, Paris, France: capacity-building seminar for senior education policy-makers of Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Rwanda and Togo, in partnership with the Shoah Memorial
- 2015: translation into Wolof and Pulaar of the UNESCO brochure Why Teach about the Holocaust by the Ministry of National Education of Senegal
- June 2015, Dakar, Senegal: UNESCO cooperated with the Aladdin Project (France) to organize an international conference, gathering education policy-makers of the region, United Nations and UNESCO representatives, and experts on the Holocaust and genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, from Africa, Europe and North America, to discuss the issues of intercultural and inter-religious understanding, culture of peace, human rights, and the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities
October 2015, Yaoundé, Cameroon: capacity-building seminar for education managers of Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the Central African Republic, in partnership with the Ministry of Education of Cameroon and the Shoah Memorial

February 2016, Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire: training for education managers of Côte d’Ivoire, in partnership with the Ministry of Education of Côte d’Ivoire and the Shoah Memorial

A conference on the same subject preceded the workshop. It was held at the Human Rights and Peace Institute of the Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD), in Dakar, on 23 November 2016.

Contents

The workshop gathered Ministry of Education representatives of the following countries:

- Burkina Faso
- Côte d’Ivoire
- The Gambia
- Mali
- Niger
- Senegal

Experts from the following organizations contributed to the workshop:

- Free University of Belgium
- Ministry of Education of Côte d’Ivoire
- Ministry of Education of France
- Shoah Memorial (France)
- South African Holocaust and Genocide Foundation
- University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar (Senegal)
- University of Freiburg (Germany)
- University Paris Diderot - Center on Global African, American and Asian Studies (France)

The workshop consisted in a series of presentations (on the concept of genocide, on the Holocaust and on the genocide of the Tutsi, on antisemitism, racism, Holocaust denial, and on violent extremism), discussions on case studies of genocide education (Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal, South Africa), and peer-to-peer workshops (on curricula, teacher training, and classroom practices).

One of the main goals of the workshop was to familiarize participants with the history of some cases of genocide. The workshop therefore included substantial presentations about the destruction of the Jews in Europe, in the context of Nazi crimes, and how this genocide was researched, represented and taught until today, including reflections on how European countries are still struggling with this difficult past. A large portion of the workshop was also dedicated to the history of Rwanda, from the colonial period to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi population, the state of research and the rising opportunities to teach more and better about this event.

In addition to this strong historical dimension, participants and experts engaged in discussions about the context and rationales for teaching about genocide, and the main modalities of implementation in their countries:

- The conceptualization and characteristics of the term “genocide” through a review of historical cases in the XXth century, from the extermination of the Herrero and Nama in the German South-West Africa (today Namibia) in 1904 to the genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994. This included considerations on definitions and the distinctions between the three legally defined international crimes (genocide, crime against humanity, and war crime) and their use in social sciences and international law. Discussions were held on related concepts sometimes used by social scientists, such as “ethnocide” or “ethnic cleansing”.
• **Why should we teach about the history of genocides in the context of West Africa?** Participants discussed with experts of the Africa region the relevance of dealing with the history of genocide and mass atrocities, including in countries that have not been directly affected by such events, and including about events — such as the Holocaust — that have only marginally affected the region. There was emphasis on the particular nature of international crimes, which affected the core dignity of human beings, and on their universal significance.

Teaching about genocide and mass atrocities was also presented as a bridge towards a better understanding of the dynamics of violence and how human rights violations can come to permeate societies, before as well as after atrocities are perpetrated. The session therefore helped linking history with contemporary issues that concern all societies, such as the potential for identity-based conflict, hate speech and ideologically driven violence.

There was also much discussion on how teaching about a particular case of genocide, in this instance the Holocaust, can be a valuable reference or an “entry-point” to explore contentious issues that are difficult to articulate in societies that have experienced atrocities. Côte d’Ivoire representatives, for example, presented the Ministry of Education initiative to reinforce the subject in history education. This effort included the following steps: appointment and training of focal points within the Ministry, information sessions and training seminars for general inspectors and national and regional coordinators and managers for history and geography, revision of the curriculum and pedagogical instructions, on-going training of teacher educators.

Participants also learnt about ongoing research on the persecution of Jews in Senegal by French Vichy authorities, and how the subject is introduced in the Senegalese education system.

• **Teaching about racism** in the classroom, based on historical cases. The participants worked for instance on the perception of Africans in post-First World War Germany, in particular of occupying French colonial troops, though a study of racist iconography of the time (newspapers caricatures, postcards, etc.). Much attention was also dedicated to the rise of antisemitism in Europe and Nazi Germany and on the anti-Tutsi racism, discrimination and propaganda in the years preceding the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The example of South Africa Apartheid was also presented. These discussions led participants to explore how to deconstruct racist beliefs with learners in history classes.

• **The prevention of violent extremism through education.** The workshop was an opportunity to articulate a link between history education and the prevention of violent extremism. Participants were familiarized with ongoing actions taken by the United Nations (notably following the United Nations Secretary General Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism) and priorities set by UNESCO in education: policies for inclusion and diversity; pedagogies that strengthen resilience and constructive engagement; safe and supporting school environments; targeted measures for learners at risk and cooperation of education authorities and schools with various public and civil society stakeholders. They were also familiarized with a new UNESCO Teachers’ guide on, the prevention of violent extremism. The participants were also introduced to some of the main issues faced in that regard in the region. For example, a study carried out in Mali with children enlisted in extremist actions to identify the causes of conflicts. It demonstrated that the will to protect one’s family, to preserve one’s physical integrity and one’s possessions were also determining factors, where the state and social justice were failing. In addition, there was an interaction of all these factors and the involvement of women and girls in the armed groups (laundress, cook, informants).

The workshop covered some of the **main areas of implementation of education about genocide**, discussing experts’ recommendations pertaining to curricula and textbooks contents, teacher training, and cooperation with private and international stakeholders. Experts emphasized how vital attention to historical accuracy is, to enable learners comprehend the complex factors that facilitated the emergence
of violence and help them make relevant and meaningful connections with their lives. In this respect, the workshop focused particularly on pedagogy and classroom practice. Participants were, for example, asked to design lessons about the Holocaust and about the genocide of the Tutsi, using various documents and archival sources.

This gave rise to reflections on the following issues:

→ **Learning objectives/outcomes** that can be expected from a lesson about the history of a case of genocide, especially as they meet with global education priorities. The contribution to such education to Global Citizenship Education and to the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education, target 7, was mentioned in that respect.

→ Introducing **comparative approaches of different cases of genocides** and mass atrocities in the lesson, to enable learners identify common patterns and processes that have led to mass-scale killings of civilians. Experts insisted on the importance of facilitating the understanding of specificities and differences that make each event unique, so as not to minimize the importance of one or the other event considered in the study.

**Issues considered during the workshop can be found in the UNESCO policy guide on Education about the Holocaust and preventing genocide:** [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002480/248071e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002480/248071e.pdf)

**Main outcomes of the workshop**

- Education policy-makers in charge of curricula and training are familiarized with the concept of genocide, its evolutions and usages. They have acquired some factual knowledge about cases of genocide throughout history, in particular the genocide of the Jewish people in Europe (“The Holocaust”, 1939-1945) and of the Tutsi in Rwanda (1994), their local/regional consequences and their influence in shaping today’s world. They are also informed about some of the main research areas and historiographic debates pertaining to Holocaust history and genocide studies.

- They are also aware of the types of resources available to introduce history about genocide and mass atrocities, in French and English, and of the support in terms of guidance; and capacity-building of governments can be expected from UNESCO, other international bodies and specialized public and private organizations with international reach.

- Participants are enabled to develop rationales to introduce the subject in their education system in a way that is relevant to their own national context. Participants can highlight, for example, the subject as a thematic focus, in particular in support of human rights and peace education policies or education policies that contribute to the prevention of violent extremism. Participants from countries that may have a past of mass atrocities and conflict have acquired some expertise in ways education measures pertaining to dealing with the past can be articulated in various disciplines, especially history and civic education, based on examples and case studies explored.

- Participants are aware of learning outcomes that can be expected from teaching about the history of genocide, in particular the Holocaust, and the potential of such education to develop skills, attitudes and behaviours that contribute to the development of a culture of peace. They are also familiarized with some of the main methods to teach about genocide and mass atrocities in a school environment, especially in history classes, and are aware of some of the main challenges faced by educators when approaching such subjects, including when engaging with comparative approaches of genocide.
Thanks to the exploration of regional case studies, the main implementation areas of the Holocaust and/or genocide education were identified at national level. Participants are enabled to review or introduce references to genocides and mass atrocities in curricula and textbooks, notably based on UNESCO’s recommendations regarding the Holocaust, to ensure an accurate and comprehensive restitution of the subject in educational media.

Regional discussion on how to teach the history of genocide and mass atrocities is enhanced.

Follow up

Participants are invited to draft a roadmap to integrate this subject in their education policies, programmes, and curriculum, as appropriate in the respective countries’ context, linking it as necessary to the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, Education 2030, specifically, Target 4.7 that promotes a culture of peace and non-violence. UNESCO suggested guiding questions to help participants in that respect.

Participants are also invited to seize opportunities offered by International Days relevant to the issue in order to initiate activities and raise awareness at local level. Amongst relevant International Days:

27 January: International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/7 (November 2005) on “Holocaust Remembrance”. The date marks the liberation of the concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, a site included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979.

7 April: International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda


9 December: International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime


UNESCO Dakar will follow-up directly with national authorities to discuss measures to provide technical support at national level.

Background Documents

UNESCO. 2017. Education about the Holocaust and preventing genocide. A policy guide
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002480/248071e.pdf

UNESCO. 2017. Preventing violent extremism through education. A guide for policy makers
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002477/247764e.pdf

UNESCO. 2016. A teacher’s guide on the prevention of violent extremism
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002446/244676e.pdf

UNESCO. 2015. Global Citizenship Education. Topics and learning objectives
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002329/232993e.pdf