



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

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

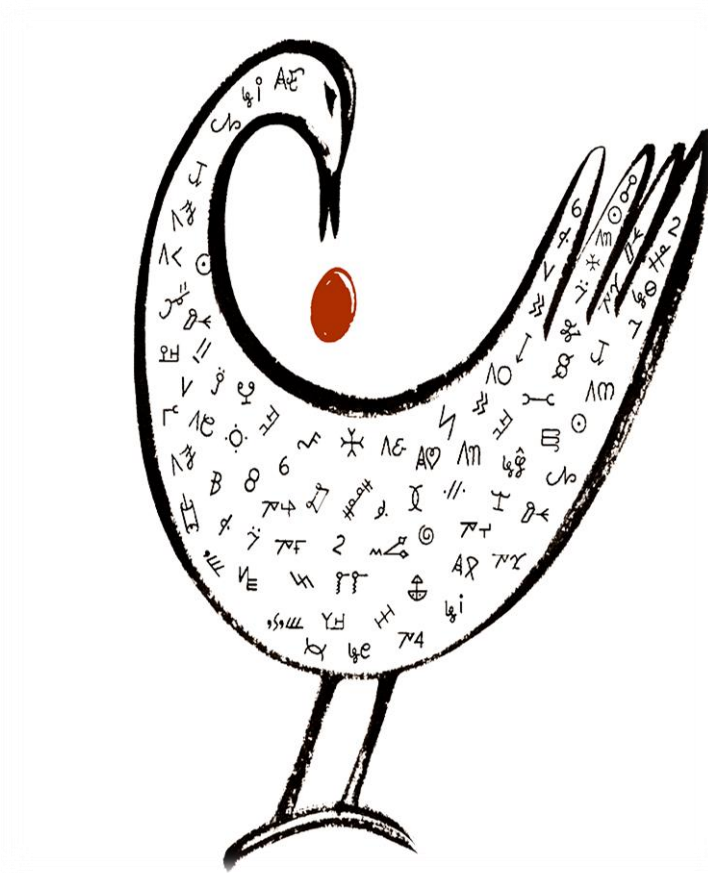
Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Coalition of Artists for the *General History of Africa*

Concept note



GENERAL HISTORY OF AFRICA

Coalition of Artists for the *General History of Africa*

Concept note

I Background to the *General History of Africa* project

In 1964, UNESCO launched the scientific, political and ethical project of the *General History of Africa* (GHA) in response to the calls by newly independent African States. The GHA project aimed to produce and promote a history of Africa from the perspective of Africans themselves, stripped of racist stereotypes created to justify the slave trade, slavery and colonial domination. The GHA was therefore intended to provide scientific insight into the true history of the African peoples and their contributions to the general progress of humanity.

Guided by a scientific committee with 39 members, the project, which brought about a major epistemological revolution by incorporating African oral traditions and literary and artistic sources into a scholarly history, mobilized some 350 specialists from various disciplines (history, linguistics, anthropology, musicology, archaeology, history of art, natural sciences, etc.).

The drafting process, which spanned almost 35 years, resulted in the publication, in eight volumes, of a monumental work with a main edition in English, French and Arabic (all or part of these volumes were also translated into ten other languages, including three African languages).

In 2009, in response to repeated calls from Member States of the African Union for the development of courses and textbooks based on the GHA and the provision of substantive support to the political project of an African cultural renaissance led by the African Union, UNESCO initiated the launch of a second phase of the GHA project: the pedagogical use of the *General History of Africa*.

This new phase consists in assessing the status of education systems and the teaching of history in Africa and, above all, in making a didactic transposition of academic knowledge (GHA) into learning content for primary- and secondary-school pupils as well as for teachers (trainers' guide). It also includes the drafting of a ninth volume of the GHA with the view to updating the already published volumes and covering the recent history of the continent and its diasporas.

II. Promoting the GHA differently

Despite their undeniable scientific and political success, the first eight volumes of the GHA remained largely unknown to the general public and African youth. Drawing lessons from this, the global strategy for the second phase of the GHA has included a more attractive form for its products that is more in harmony with new forms of knowledge consumption, using digital technology and interactive, fun methods. It has also established a communication plan supported by opinion leaders, such as artists, to convey the message of the GHA to young Africans and the diaspora in particular. In that connection, UNESCO intends to establish a network of African and non-African artists (musicians, film-makers, playwrights, actors, painters, photographers, etc.), called "**the International Coalition of Artists for the *General History of Africa***", in order to raise awareness among young Africans and the general public regarding the importance of a better understanding of the continent's history and cultures.

A. **Coalition plan of action**

To support the implementation of the GHA project and help young Africans and the diaspora to make the products their own, a Coalition of Artists for the GHA was established, with the following objectives:

- use the great events of African history as material for artistic creation;
- regularly relay the messages of the GHA to young Africans (on websites, Twitter, Facebook, etc.);
- contribute to the promotion of the volumes of the GHA published by UNESCO (on websites, Twitter, Facebook, etc.);
- increase media coverage of the GHA by referring to it during interviews (television, radio, Internet, press, etc.);
- prepare video messages supporting the GHA project for the UNESCO website;
- agree to participate occasionally in various activities organized by UNESCO for the GHA;
- agree to participate in the preparation and recording of a song and video clip for the GHA;
- contribute to fundraising activities, including launching calls for support for the GHA;
- agree to include on their website the project's logo and a direct link to the GHA project's website.

B. Composition of the coalition

Personalities approached to become members of the coalition should have gained considerable respectability in their artistic discipline, demonstrated throughout their careers a strong commitment to African cultures and history and should be able to mobilize young people around a number of central themes for the GHA (appreciation of African contributions to contemporary societies, “decolonization” of minds, promotion of a pan-African identity and citizenship, celebration of the contributions of African diasporas, etc.). In view of his commitment for better knowledge of urban and traditional African music and action in fostering cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, the Director-General of UNESCO has appointed the Congolese-born musician Mr Ray Lema as Spokesperson of the International Coalition.

C. Functioning of the coalition

Members of the Coalition of Artists for the *General History of Africa* will be co-signatories of a Declaration of Commitment defining the scope of their actions. The artists will be invited to use their public appearances (interviews, concerts, etc.) to promote the activities and products of the GHA. Moreover, the most active artists of the coalition, particularly the mentors, may be invited to take part in various events organized as part of the implementation of the GHA project and to meet, on that occasion, with members of the various scientific committees.

Artist coalition members may submit an annual programme of events during which they wish to speak of the GHA and promote its message. A page on UNESCO's website (in the section reserved for the GHA) will post all of the videos, messages and activities of the members of the coalition for the promotion of the GHA.