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A YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION

AN ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNESCO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

2024

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

The year 2024 has been a transformative chapter for the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa. Despite considerable challenges, our efforts have been marked by resilience, strategic foresight, and a deep commitment to advancing sustainable development through media strengthening and ethical governance of digital technologies, culture and development, education, biodiversity and water, and inclusion, in particular, of persons with disabilities. This report reflects not only on what we have achieved, but also on how we are preparing to contribute to a stronger, more inclusive future.

Our work in education continues to be guided by the belief that learning grounded in local culture and present-day realities empowers communities. Intersectoral initiatives such as "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Basic Education" in Namibia and Zimbabwe have successfully brought living heritageinto classrooms, nurturing both identity and curiosity. The "Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future" initiative, and its expansion through O3 PLUS, have further supported youth with life skills, health education, and safer learning environments.

We have made notable progress in science, technology and innovation, especially through initiatives like the Internet of Things-based environmental monitoring systems in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. These advancements are vital in enhancing disaster preparedness and resilience. Equally, by supporting events like the Society of Economic Geologists Conference in Namibia, we are nurturing a new generation of ethical and forward-thinking geoscientists. In the area of water resource management, our work has strengthened national capacities to monitor and sustainably govern shared water systems.

Culture and heritage were not only promoted, but also woven into strategies for climate adaptation and economic development. The restoration of the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site has become a model for combining conservation with community-based tourism and local enterprise. In media development, we remained steadfast in our support for press freedom, training journalists in new areas and bringing together institutions that uphold independent, ethical journalism across the region and beyond.

In the digital domain, we have taken meaningful steps by initiating Readiness Assessments across six countries in Southern Africa to govern Artificial Intelligence, ensuring that countries can adopt emerging technologies responsibly. Our efforts to integrate digital tools into education underscore our commitment to bridging the digital divide and building a future-ready youth.

Partnerships have been a cornerstone of our progress. Whether through joint initiatives with UNICEF and UNFPA on disability-inclusion in Eswatini, disability inclusive climate resilience efforts with FAO in Lesotho, or strategic collaboration with regional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, we have advanced our shared objectives through collective action and mutual respect. We are grateful to the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) across nine countries for their collaboration with us. Support from the United Nations Resident Coordinators helped us be part of the new joint initiatives of the UNCTs, and the National Commissions for UNESCO enabled us to walk the talk in six countries where we only have project level presence.
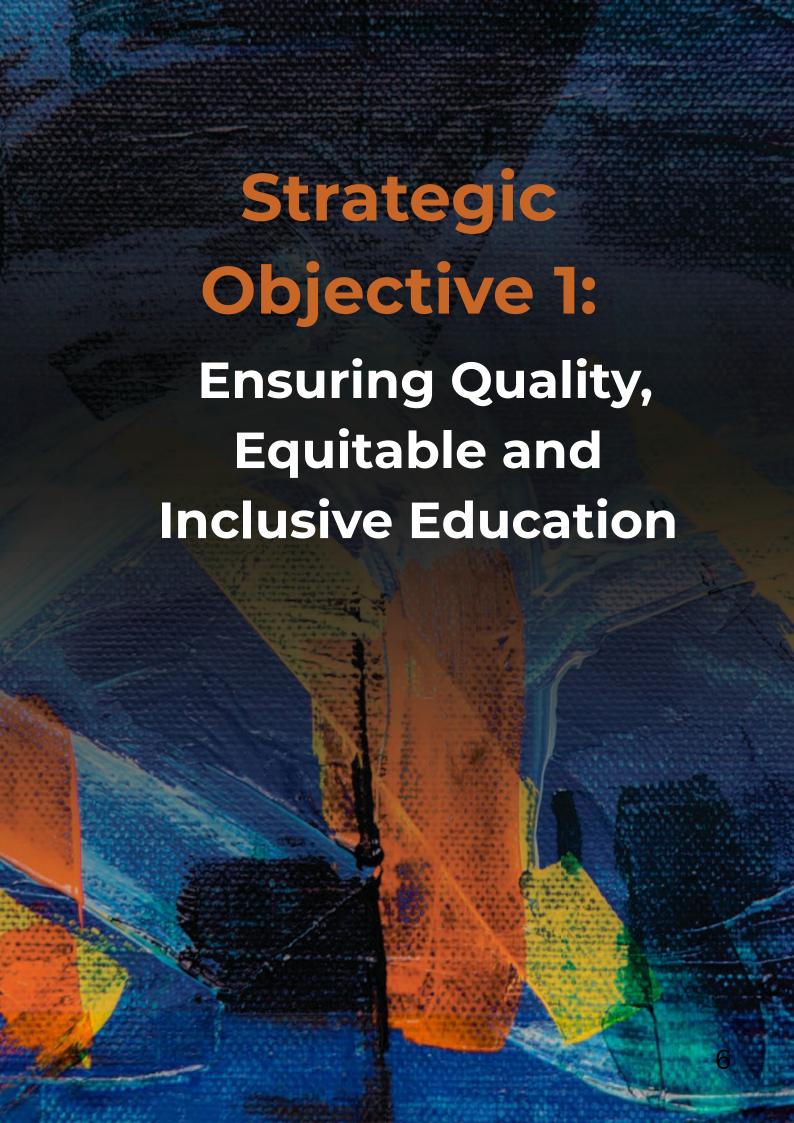
Internally, we have prioritised the strengthening of administrative systems to better support our programmatic delivery. Significant progress was made in enhancing financial oversight, human resources, and operational efficiency – laying a strong institutional foundation for sustainable impact. In line with our commitment to environmental responsibility, the office further strengthened greener practices, including the initiation of a rainwater harvesting system, reinforcement of water and energy-efficient operations, and reduction in paper usage. Our commitment to disability-inclusive development was further strengthened by integrating accessibility and equity considerations in accessing our office premises.

Looking ahead, our vision remains clear. Programmatically, we will make our best efforts to fully implement the Regional Support Strategy of the office by prioritizing girls' and women's meaningful participation in science, technology, and innovation; strengthening inclusive and equitable quality education across all levels; and empowering young people through skills development for the green and digital economies. We will strengthen cultural and creative industries, safeguard and promote our diverse cultural and natural heritage, and advance digital transformation to enhance youth employment, access to information, and community resilience. In addressing the urgent challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, we will foster sustainable natural resource management, ensure equitable access to clean water, and support community-led water governance, particularly in rural areas. Seeking opportunities to scale up and replicate our work on renewable energy solutions as a pathway to energy equity, environmental sustainability, and economic empowerment, especially for underserved and off-grid communities will receive focused attention.

Through all our efforts in 2025, including administrative judiciousness, we will be looking at not just operational improvements but a strategic shift towards a more resilient and future-ready office. Our programmatic emphasis will be on building peaceful, inclusive societies, promoting human rights and gender equality, and amplifying the voices of the most marginalized to ensure no one is left behind.

In closing, I must stress that it is our financing, technical and implementing partners' trust and collaboration that have enabled us to turn challenges into opportunities. We are privileged to be building a more inclusive, sustainable, and empowered Southern Africa with our partners and stakeholders. We extend our sincere gratitude to all of them.

Nisha
Director of Office and UNESCO Representative to Southern Africa

Strategic Objective 1:

Ensuring Quality, Equitable and Inclusive Education

SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN BASIC EDUCATION

Namibia and Zimbabwe

In December 2024 UNESCO concluded the implementation of the "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Basic Education in Namibia and Zimbabwe" project. Implemented in collaboration with the Governments of Namibia and Zimbabwe with the generous support of the Government of Flanders, the project aimed to enhance the quality and relevance of education through the integration of living heritage into the education systems of the two countries. The project contributed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals targets 4.7, 11.4, and 12.8.

By integrating living heritage into school curricula, the project empowered the relevant ministries, schools, and teachers to make learning culturally relevant for young students. A comprehensive methodological and formative assessment framework was developed as a toolkit covering conceptual and practical aspects on teaching about and with living heritage. These tools equip teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders with the knowledge and skills to identify and integrate living heritage into the classroom through a whole school approach.

SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN BASIC EDUCATION
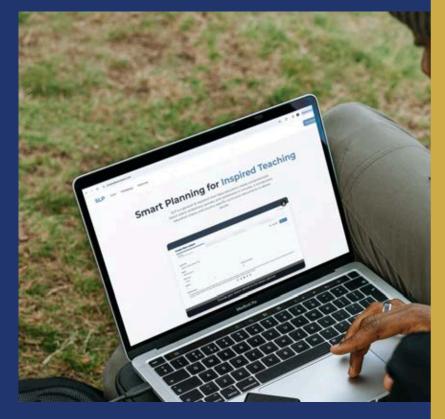
Students showcasing traditional herbs they use as aids in various learning areas, including Biology and Geography

The project contributed to policy dialogue and the development of national frameworks for heritage-based education. Policy briefs, anchored from data gathered from schools, senior government personnel and heritage bearers, were developed. The recommendations in the policy briefs provided actionable steps to ensure living heritage is embedded in school activities, thereby ensuring its safeguarding and transmission to future generation

2 Policy briefs developed to revise and strengthen Education policies

Policy mechanisms established between Ministries of Education and Culture

ICH practitioners have bee engaged and actively participated in the project implementation

Community participation has been ensured to uphold the **whole-school approach.**

At least **120+ teachers** coordinated the projects from the **whole school action plans**

At least **1000+ learners** directly benefitted from the project

24 schools icipating in the project

Teacher Training Toolkit developed (including a **methodological framework**, **formative assessment framework** and sample **lesson plans**

OUR RIGHTS OUR LIVES, OUR FUTURE (O3) PROGRAMME REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

In 2024, UNESCO's Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3) programme continued its vital work across 35 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on **improving education, health, and well-being for adolescents.** With funding support from the Governments of Sweden, France, Ireland and Norway, the programme achieved significant milestones, transforming lives and shaping futures.

In schools, the programme has made strides toward improving the delivery of quality rights-based gender transformative comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) reaching over **50,000 pre-service teachers** and **41,000 in-service teachers with CSE** and school violence prevention. These teachers reached over **23.4 million young learners** in nearly **190,000 schools** with good quality CSE and violence prevention education. Beyond physical teacher training, the programme also leveraged innovative online tools such as the AI-powered Scripted Lesson Planner which guides educators through an intuitive process to create customized lesson plans and materials. The tool was piloted in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, with a full launch planned for 2025. It currently serves 4,000 registered global users.

In ensuring the principle of leaving no one behind, the programme has a specific focus in reaching hard-to-reach groups such as **learners with disabilities and learners in conflict and humanitarian settings.** Driven by a unified vision to empower young people to learn and thrive in safe and supportive environments, the programme also rolled out the **Connect with Respect (CwR)** tool to equip schools, teachers and students in preventing and responding to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). The programme also works with and for adolescents and young people by empowering them to speak up against cyberbullying and other forms of violence.

OUR RIGHTS OUR LIVES, OUR FUTURE (O3 PLUS) PROGRAMME REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

As an extension to the O3 programme, **the Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future PLUS (O3 PLUS)** programme runs in 38 select higher education institutions across six countries - **Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe** – to ensure young students can learn and thrive in healthy and safe campus environments. The programme is funded by the Governments of Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and France. A total of **250,000 students** were reached with accurate, rights-based sexuality education with 840 lecturers trained on the delivery of CSE and 43 institutions **equipped with policies, strategies, and guidelines** that have incorporated sexuality education, ensuring an enabling environment for students. One key initiative is the **Safer Campuses Campaign** which was launched in March 2024 at the regional level and across all countries **reaching over 3 million students.** By sparking a student-led movement, the campaign was designed to break the silence surrounding gender-based violence, encouraging open dialogue and active engagement within educational institutions.

CYBER BULLYING: ASPHEPHENI SECURE OUR WORLD!

Eswatini

The Our Rights Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme launched a campaign to raise awareness on the legal consequences of cyberbullying and inappropriate internet use. together with the Eswatini Communications Commission, Ministry of Education, The Deputy Prime Minister's Child Protection Unit and the Royal Eswatini Police Cyber Unit. The campaign is designed to raise awareness and sensitize young learners on cyberbullying, share referral mechanisms and guidance on how to report the crimes via the 116 hotline, while creating a culture of responsible online citizenship.

4700 *learners reached through school visits*

10 000 *people reached through campaign messaging in and around the Matsapha Central Business District.*

"The pair of shoes I used to wear to school were torn but there was nothing I could do about it – my parents couldn't afford to buy me new ones at the time. But one of the other students took a picture of me with these shoes and posted it on a WhatsApp channel "skhipha ma files" with an awful caption – the words they used....it was very degrading. That is a popular WhatsApp channel because there are learners from different schools from across the country on this channel. So many people started commenting and ridiculing that photo. I was so embarrassed...so much so that I was even scared to go back to school wearing those shoes..." "I know who the bully was. I know the perpetrator. It is a senior from my own school, and this is why I didn't report it." **17 year old victim of cyberbullying.**

UNESCO continues to promote schools that are safe, healthy and inclusive. This campaign will support the development of school guidelines on Online Safety and Cyberbullying which will equip schools, administrators, librarians and parents with the skills and tools to ensure online safety, while promoting positive online conduct amongst learners.

CONNECT WITH RESPECT

Lesotho

UNESCO's Our Rights Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme: The revision of school violence policies in 2024 led to stronger protection mechanisms in schools, thereby creating safer violence-free environments for young learners to thrive. Forty (40) secondary level teachers and principals were initially trained on preventing and responding to school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) through the **Connect with Respect (CwR)** tool, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. According to these trained pilot teachers, the schools have witnessed a stark reduction in the number of reported cases of bullying and violence within the school. The trained teachers are now working collectively to propose strategies that could potentially cascade into a nation-wide implementation of the Prevention of School-related Gender-based Violence. The Ministry of Education is mobilizing funding from other partners to integrate CwR in the mainstream school curricula and scale up implementation – showing ownership and sustainability of UNESCO's initiative.

"This programme has introduced us to a lot of positivity; we have seen improved relationships amongst students and teachers, we see greater respect for one another, and we are introducing positive and interactive ways of disciplining our learners, thanks to the Connect with Respect tool. We have seen a significant decline in reports of violence and bullying from the learners, and this highlights their understanding of the issue of violence and how it impacts their peers in schools," **Maujane Aujane, a teacher at Maliba-Matso High School in Leribe in Lesotho.**

This intervention has also fostered collaborations between schools and key external stakeholders like the police and healthcare workers, making reporting, referrals and service delivery smoother and more efficient.

CONNECT WITH RESPECT

Zimbabwe

Through the Our Rights Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme, UNESCO has been collaborating with the Ministries of Education across sub-Saharan Africa, to ensure significant progress is made in the fight against school-related gender-based violence. This includes specialized training programmes for teachers and school directors on the methods of positive discipline, while equipping them to both prevent and respond to violence. Zimbabwe has been receiving this support.

To comprehensively respond to and prevent all forms of violence against children, UNESCO worked with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) to support the Government in updating and developing policy circulars to foster safe learning environments. The circulars included the establishment of reporting structures at the provincial, district, and school levels, dedicated training for principals and teachers on safe-to-learn initiatives, the establishment of Child Protection Committees bringing together the Zimbabwe Republic Police, Faith-Based Organizations, and other stakeholders.

Protecting Students, Transforming Education

There was a general lack of understanding on reporting procedures for cases of abuse, rape and other forms of violence in schools. As a result, many forms of violence, often perpetrated within the school environment and in some cases by teachers, went unnoticed.

Protecting young learners across the sub-Saharan African region is very much at the heart of UNESCO's work. UNESCO will continue to ensure policies and procedures are developed and rolled out to safeguard students, because as is evident, protecting students goes well beyond just transforming education – it is creating a safe and conducive learning environment, both in and out of schools, for all our young learners to thrive!

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

Malawi

UNESCO's Our Rights Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme made substantial progress in advancing the Life Skills Education (LSE) programme, training nearly 9,000 pre-service and 13,600 in-service teachers. This has resulted in LSE reaching 70% of primary school learners, contributing to a notable increase in gender and sexual and reproductive health knowledge, improved perceptions, and positive behavioural changes among learners. These changes are particularly evident in shifting gender norms related to girls' education and addressing school-related gender-based violence. There has also been some improvement in SRHR and HIV knowledge across various education divisions and localities.

Wezi's story illustrates the power of inclusive education and advocacy. Her journeys shows that when teachers and young leaders are equipped with the right skills and knowledge, they can drive meaningful change in their communities – she is transforming lives and paving the way for a more inclusive future

"

My students became assertive and confident in expressing themselves. They feel confident and comfortable sharing their feelings and even approach me with questions about the changes in their bodies. I realized that when I am confident, my students are confident too."

Wezi Phiri, Teacher

Beyond Calling

"Teaching learners with disabilities is not always easy, and even though I didn't have any specialized training in this area, inside me I knew I had a deep calling for this." Wezi.

Wezi Phiri, is a dedicated primary school teacher at Mlodza Resource Center in Lilongwe Malawi. Wezi developed an interest in inclusive education and this led her to the resource center attached to the school in 2020.
As she began working with students there, she quickly identified several challenges, e.g. many of her female students struggled with managing hygiene during menstruation. She realized this was due to a lack of knowledge on sexual reproductive health and rights, and inadequate disability friendly facilities within the resource center. She soon realized that these young learners needed to be taught Life Skills Education (LSE).

''Learners with disabilities have a right to access LSE and I wanted all my students to develop lifeskills" says Wezi.

Wezi was selected together with 23 other teachers, to be part of a training of trainers' workshop on Breaking the Silence (BtS), which is an approach on teaching comprehensive sexuality education for learners with disabilities. The workshop, organized by UNESCO through the Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme, together with the South Africa Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and UNFPA, was a turning point for Wezi as it introduced her to participatory teaching skills designed to meet the diverse needs of her students on various LSE topics. Equipped with these new skills, Wezi began teaching LSE with confidence, using interactive activities such as games and plays. Soon, she started observing positive reactions among learners

HEALTH EDUCATION

South Africa

UNESCO continues to support the Department of Basic Education in scaling up health education to ensure its sustainability and broad implementation across the country. This is achieved through capacity-building initiatives, including the training of 2,110 in-service educators, 1,220 secondary school teachers, 890 primary school teachers and 99 teacher educators on health education. Teacher trainers, in turn, cascade their training to Life Orientation and Life Skills educators while providing ongoing monitoring and support. Through its integration into the Life Orientation and Life Skills subjects, health education was implemented in 21,817 schools nationwide in 2024.

Additionally, through the Our Rights Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme, UNESCO has played a crucial role in training curriculum developers to adapt Scripted Lesson Plans for use in special schools, ensuring inclusivity and that all learners, including learners with disabilities, are reached with health education.

HEALTH EDUCATION FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

Mozambique

> *Traditionally, these topics were addressed by aunties and elder women in the community to girls only. Now, with health education taught in schools, we can openly ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of our sexuality in a safe and supportive learning environment*

Young learner from Mozambique

UNESCO's Our Rights Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme made substantial progress in advancing comprehensive sexuality education, reaching **116,800 young learners** through an innovative approach by integrating health education into a science curriculum. Among them, **90,593 primary school students** including 43,629 girls and 26,207 secondary school students including 12,625 girls benefited from lessons delivered by trained and mentored in-service teachers. These lessons covered critical topics such as strategies for preventing early unions and pregnancies and reporting school-related gender-based violence, bullying, and discrimination. By fostering safe, inclusive, and gender-responsive learning environments, this initiative is empowering young learners to take control of their well-being, ensuring they can navigate life with confidence and resilience

At Meconta Sede Secondary School in the Meconta district, Nampula province, in a class on the 'Periodic Table, Importance and Characteristics,' Guilherme António Amisse, a 11th grade chemistry teacher, skillfully weaves in the topic of menstrual management as a crosscutting theme. By drawing parallels between the periodic table and the menstrual calendar, the lesson not only illuminates the scientific principles behind both subjects but also demystifies longstanding community taboos about discussing menstrual health in the open. This creative integration continues to empower students to actively engage, ask questions, and clarify doubts, while also equipping the teacher with a versatile pedagogical tool that bridges academic content and life skills. As a result, both teachers and students benefit from a more inclusive and open learning environment that fosters informed decision-making and breaks down cultural barriers.

Covering topics like strategies for preventing early unions and pregnancies and reporting school-related gender-based violence, bullying, and discrimination, this innovative approach in integrating Comprehensive Sexuality Education into a science curriculum, is making a profound impact, empowering all learners to take control of their well-being. *"These lessons are so important for growing young learners, as it shapes their futures,"* says teacher Amisse.

Through dedicated teachers like Amisse, health education is transforming young learners, teachers and families in Mozambique and 34 other countries across sub-Saharan Africa through UNESCO and other partners, because health education is more than just academics.

LIFE SKILLS AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Zambia

Through the Our Rights Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme, UNESCO strengthened parliamentary engagement to advance Life Skills and Health Education (LSHE) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) through Zambia's special parliamentary caucus on LSHE and SRHR. This platform has been instrumental in mobilizing policymakers to drive legislative and programmatic action that enhances the health and well-being of young people.

30 Members of Parliament (MPs) participated in capacity-building initiatives and collaboratively developed the 2024 annual work plan to enhance LSHE implementation in their constituencies. Additionally, 25 MPs reviewed the 2024 plan and jointly developed the 2025 annual work plan, ensuring continuity and strategic alignment with national priorities. In total, 55 MPs (39 men and 16 women) actively contributed to strengthening LSHE and SRHR implementation at both national and local levels.

Sustained engagement has yielded tangible outcomes, including strengthened parliamentary advocacy and oversight, increased community awareness, and improved integration of LSHE into both school curricula and community programs. As a result, young people are gaining essential life skills, making informed health choices, and benefiting from stronger community support systems. The visible leadership of MPs has also fostered multi-stakeholder collaboration, driving sustainable development and empowering youth as agents of change.

CONTINUATION OF EDUCATION FOR PREGNANT GIRLS AND ADOLESCENT PARENTS

Zimbabwe

In a significant step toward ensuring the right to education for adolescent parents, UNESCO supported the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) in drafting the Secretary's Circular on the Continuation of Education for Pregnant Girls and Adolescent Parents. This policy, supported by UNESCO through the **Our Rights Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme,** aims to eliminate barriers that often force adolescent mothers and fathers out of school, reinforcing their right to remain in and complete their education. By fostering stronger collaboration among government ministries, schools, communities, and parents, the circular provides a structured framework for supporting adolescent parents' retention and re-integration into the education system. With the circular finalized for approval by December 2024, its successful implementation is expected to increase school retention rates among adolescent mothers and fathers, reduce dropout rates, and strengthen education continuity mechanisms.

"For us in Zimbabwe, we strive to ensure that the adolescent mother never leaves school but to put in place support systems that ensure the continuation of learning. These guidelines and materials are intended to direct the educators at the school level and the pupils, ensuring that no one is left behind."
MoPSE Learner Welfare Chief Director, Ms. Nyanungo

Accompanying information materials for students will be disseminated in 2025. Close monitoring of policy rollout will be essential to ensure its effectiveness in removing stigma, providing necessary support services, and reinforcing the commitment to inclusive education.

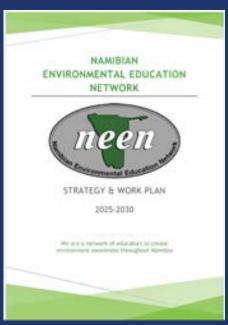# STRENGTHENING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Namibia

In 2024, UNESCO, in partnership with the Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET), supported the development of the Namibian Environmental Education Network (NEEN) Strategy and Work Plan 2025–2030. This initiative marks a significant step forward in advancing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Namibia, enhancing national coordination and action in alignment with the Namibia Country Initiative for ESD for 2030.

Key milestones of the project included

 Development and validation of a NEEN Strategy and six-year Work Plan through a participatory process involving NEEN members, tertiary institutions, NGOs, youth organisations, and government partners.
 Drafting of a joint fundraising proposal for a biennial professional development conference series on ESD for educators, setting the stage for future resource mobilisation and collaboration.

STRENGTHENING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SADC REGION

In the Southern African region, the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa has launched, in line with the UNESCO Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2022-2029) and its Campus Africa Flagship Programme, a series of capacity-building workshops to strengthen quality assurance in higher education, with Zimbabwe hosting the pilot workshop in October 2024. Bringing together quality assurance managers and directors from 20 accredited higher education institutions across the country, the workshop addressed critical quality assurance topics such as curriculum development, digital transformation and internationalization.

This pilot contributes to the visions in the Zimbabwe Education 5.0 policy to transform higher education by focusing on teaching, research, community service, innovation, and industrialization, ultimately driving socio-economic development. This series of workshops seeks to build synergies with existing regional and international quality assurance initiatives including the Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN), African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN), the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative, and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), to meet Africa's local, regional and continental development challenges.

"The vision that we have in order to improve the quality of higher education in the country is to ensure that we continue with these kinds of workshops for all the directors of quality assurance in the country, and we do hope that, from that level, these workshops are cascaded down to all the personnel in all the faculties"

Prof. Kuzvinetsa P. Dzvimbo, CEO of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education.

"What was so outstanding in the workshop is that quality is defined by society. There are many things that I would want to implement when I go back to my institution, such as the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching, learning and research, because AI is here to stay, and we have learned that we cannot run away from it. And before we integrate it, we are going to come up with a policy that guides the use of AI and AI technologies."

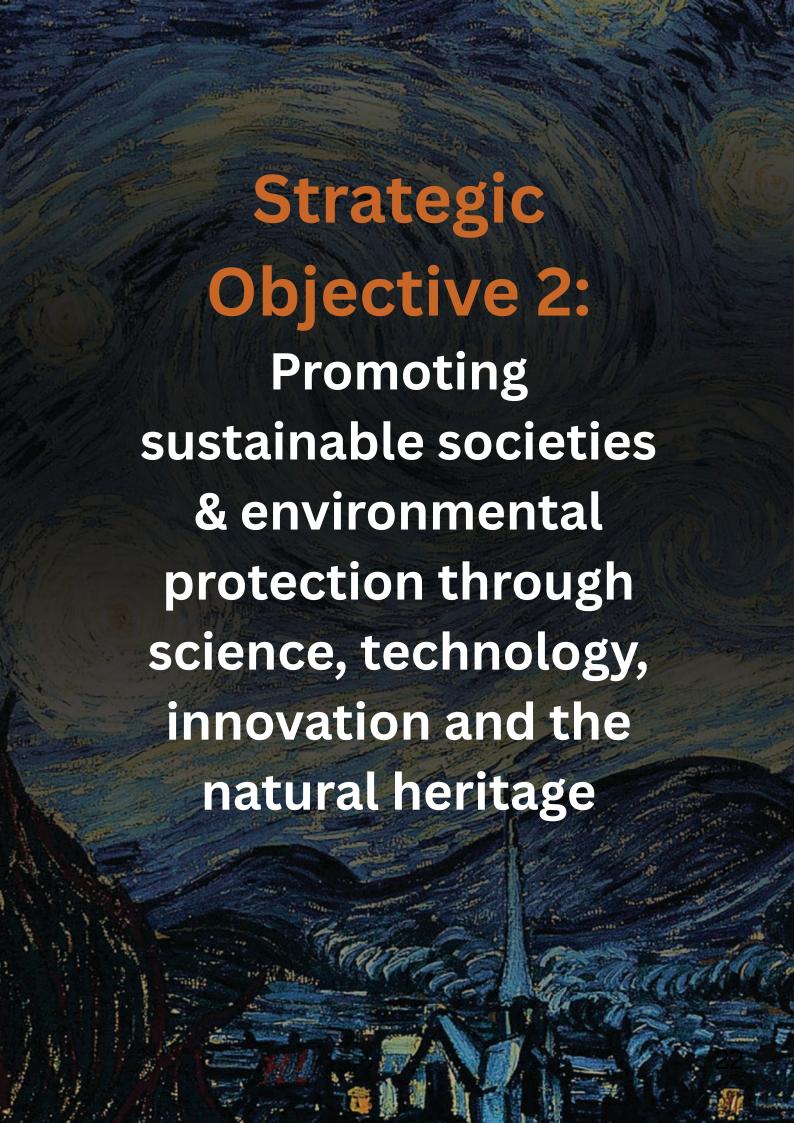**Ms Shynet Chivasa, Director for Quality Assurance at Lupane State University.**

STRENGTHENING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SADC REGION

"This UNESCO workshop has been very beneficial to me and my institution. When I go back to my institution, I would set in motion the processes to ensure that we start moving towards improved assessment methods that are outcome-based and to prepare students and lecturers for the digitalization of higher education, and cascade that knowledge to other institutions."
Mr Liberty Machona, Director of Quality Assurance at Africa University

Strategic Objective 2:

Promoting sustainable societies & environmental protection through science, technology, innovation and the natural heritage

STRENGTHENING CLIMATE RESILIENCE WITH IoT MONITORING IN BUPUSA CATCHMENTS

Mozambique

A new Internet of Things, IoT-based environmental monitoring system in the Buzi, Pungwe, and Save (BUPUSA) catchments is enhancing early warning systems, water security, and disaster risk reduction in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. With real-time data transmission every 10 minutes, communities now receive accurate, timely hydrometeorological data, improving disaster preparedness.

The Central Regional Water Administration (ARA-Centro), the Southern Regional Water Administration (ARA-Sul), the National Institute of Meteorology (INAM), and UNESCO with the funding from the Austrian Development Agency support, the initiative includes:

• 5 weather stations (measuring temperature, pressure, humidity, wind speed/direction, and precipitation)
• 3 water level sensors
• LoRaWAN gateways for real-time climate monitoring

The real-time data transmission will be instrumental in improving early warning systems, developing high-resolution flood maps, and supporting other disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives. **Prof. Martiale Zebaze Kana, UNESCO**

"The automated weather stations not only provide localized meteorological data but also enhance the entire forecasting chain from community to national levels." **Mr. Padenga from ARA-Centro**

Mozambique, frequently hit by floods and droughts, is highly vulnerable to extreme weather, e.g. Tropical Cyclone Idai. Beyond technology, this initiative strengthens flood modelling, early warning systems, and agricultural planning, ensuring communities receive timely alerts to mitigate risks and enhance climate resilience

23

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GEOSCIENTISTS AT SEG 2024

Namibia

By providing students and early-career scientists with access to global platforms, UNESCO ensures that future leaders are equipped with the knowledge and networks necessary to promote sustainable mining practices.
Ms Kombada Mhopjeni
UNESCO

For many young scientists, global networking opportunities remain rare. But for ten Southern African early-career geologists, the SEG 2024 Conference in Windhoek, Namibia, was a game-changer.

With support from UNESCO and the Society of Economic Geologists (SEG) Conference Accessibility Fund, these aspiring geoscientists moved beyond theory into career-defining experiences. Held from September 27-30, the event gathered experts to tackle key topics like energy transition, specialty metals, and sustainable mining. For these young scientists, SEG 2024 was more than a conference—it was a launchpad into the future of responsible mineral exploration. For Filippus Lukas, the conference was more than academic—it opened doors to potential employers and groundbreaking discussions on gold exploration in Africa. Through such initiatives, UNESCO continues to break barriers and empower the next generation of geoscientists.

As scientists, we should invest in people and always care about how our innovative ideas affect them and the environment. **Mary Sithole, winner of the SEG Poster Presentation Award**

AWARD-WINNING CITIZEN SCIENCE: YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN CLIMATE ACTION AND WATER SECURITY IN THE VHEMBE BIOSPHERE RESERVE

South Africa

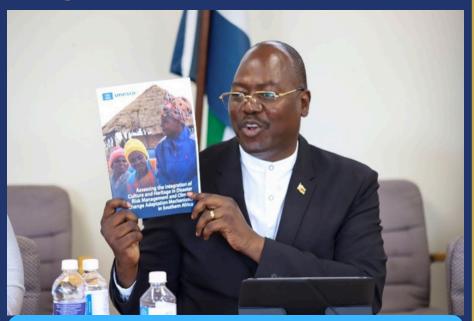> Working with communities has been a profound learning experience for the project team. "The greatest lesson has been unlearning…It's not about teaching but partnering with communities to solve challenges together. **Mukona Kone – Citizen Scientist and Data Manager**.

In the heart of the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, women and youth are taking center stage in the fight against climate change, advocating for water security, environmental sustainability and education for future generations. The UNESCO Be Resilient South Africa Project, funded by the Government of Flanders, to date, empowered over 50 youth of which 60 % were females in citizen science concepts, freshwater river health monitoring, and smartphone-based water quality data collection and data analysis. These skills have led to the recording of more than 2,500 water quality observations across in the 4 biosphere reserves, Kruger-to-Canyons, Vhembe, Marico, and Cape Winelands . The project deployed and trained communities, universities, government agencies on low-cost Internet of Things "IoT" tools such as weather stations, water level sensors, and gateways. "IoT" infrastructure is essential to bridge critical gaps in data monitoring to enhanced early warning systems, water security, and disaster risk reduction, thus ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience

INTEGRATING CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION MECHANISMS

Regional

Mr. Nicholas Moyo - Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture in Zimbabwe, launching the report.

"When we take disaster risk strategies as a mechanical process out of their human and environmental contexts, they risk irrelevance or rejection by communities. Resilience must be rooted in the cultural and social realities of the people it seeks to protect." - Ms. Nisha, UNESCO Regional Director for Southern Africa

In 2024, the UNESCO Regional Office of Southern Africa successfully launched a new report, "Assessing the Integration of Culture and Heritage in Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in Southern Africa". The Report reveals a critical lack of human and financial capacities and poor pre-disaster conditions for culture and heritage, which impede the response capacity of the sector in times of emergencies.It states that many countries in Southern Africa are unaware of the risks affecting their culture and heritage and, as a result, are unprepared to address them. The capacity of the culture and heritage sector regarding disaster preparedness and risk mitigation in most of these countries is generally unknown and risks to culture and heritage are also exacerbated by preexisting issues, such as poor maintenance, which contribute to increasing vulnerabilities.

The study provides several recommendations, includingensuring that culture and heritage are integrated in DRM and CCA mechanisms, improving data generation and pursuing partnerships at multi-levels as well as ensuring that the impact of emergencies and climate change on artists and cultural professionals is considered and actions taken to support them.

THE REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GREAT ZIMBABWE WORLD HERITAGE SITE.

Zimbabwe

With the support of the French Development Cooperation, and in collaboration with UNOPS, UNESCO developed an integrated Management Plan (2024-2028) for site management. Sixteen (16) NMMZ staff members received training in disaster risk management and heritage resilience in collaboration with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property resulting in a comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Plan. Thirty-Five (35) community tour guides were trained in visitor engagement and site interpretation, enhancing the quality of guided tours and the overall visitor experience. Conservation equipment and documentation tools were procured for National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe supporting site preservation and monitoring.

"Being part of the restoration efforts has deepened my understanding of the importance of preserving our cultural heritage and I happy to have gained skills of stone masonry from the staff here at site."

Chris Mugabe, Community Member.

An Interpretation and Storytelling Framework was created to enrich visitor experiences. Fifty (50) diverse people were engaged at a Youth Heritage Hub in conserving the Hill Complex, ensuring intergenerational knowledge exchange. The Great Zimbabwe Destination Tourism Development and Marketing Strategy was formulated, positioning the site as a premier cultural heritage destination. A Destination Management and Marketing Organization was established to enhance tourism branding and product development efforts. A Cultural Hub was established to support local entrepreneurship in arts, crafts, and tourism services, benefiting 13 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and 56 artists. Seven (7) entrepreneurs received seed funding to support tourism-related businesses, enhancing local livelihoods. The Great Zimbabwe Local Development Plan was developed, aligning infrastructure and land use planning with conservation and sustainable tourism.

EMPOWERING THE CREATIVE SECTOR: THE UNESCO-ASCHBERG PROJECT

Namibia

In 2024, the UNESCO-Aschberg Programme supported the strengthening of Namibia's creative industries by reviewing the National Arts Fund Act No. 1 of 2005 and drafting accompanying regulations to ensure more structured and sustainable support for the arts sector. This was led by the National Arts Council of Namibia (NACN, the Ministry of Justice, and the Directorate of Arts under the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Regional consultations were held across all **14 regions** of Namibia, engaging **456 participants,** including artists, cultural practitioners, policymakers, and youth. These consultations were complemented by three hybrid panel discussions, which drew **118 participants,** ensuring broader participation and input from diverse stakeholders.The revised National Arts Fund Act and draft regulations have been submitted to the Legal Drafters and are currently awaiting verification by the Attorney General to ensure alignment with the Namibian Constitution.

The UNESCO-Aschberg Programme has laid a strong foundation for professionalizing and sustaining Namibia's arts and culture sector. It fostered collaboration between national and international experts, addressed critical sectoral gaps, and paved the way for a more vibrant and resilient creative industry.

Strategic Objective 3:

Building inclusive, just and peaceful societies

SOUTHERN AFRICAN NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, A SHARED HISTORY

BEYOND MAYIBUYE

Co-Creation with the Public

Regional

UNESCO, Javett-UP and International Council of Museums (ICOM) brought together 20 museum, cultural institutions, education, and artist practitioners to deliberate on the vital history of African Liberation Movements, and how to meaningfully engage communities, and ultimately deepen public knowledge on this heritage. A toolkit "**Beyond Mayibuye: Co-creating with the Public"**, was born out of this collaboration in 2024. It is designed for cultural institutions to p**romote intergenerational transmission on the liberation movements** through the key concepts of co-creation and community collecting, thereby inviting local voices to contribute to the multiple narratives of liberation. In Phase 2, educational programmes will be developed from piloting the toolkit to enable local communities and visitors alike to form a deeper awareness of the struggle for liberation Southern African nations endured, forming strong cognitive and socio-emotional impacts for all.

unesco   JAVETT-UP   ICOM

THE STATE OF INFORMALITY IN THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE SECTORS

Zimbabwe

With the support of the UNESCO-Aschberg Programme and in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNESCO supported efforts by Zimbabwe's creative economy in its transition from informality to the formal economy.A baseline study on the state of informality was concluded in 2023 and a National Indaba on the transition was held in March 2024 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The National Indaba addressed the main drivers of informality in the cultural and creative sectors,such as lack of incentives to formalize, poor working conditions and an absence of social protection mechanisms or entitlements for workers in the creative economy.

The Indaba set out the intention to implement an integrated approach that supports **decent work areas.**

Attaining the decent work areas requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders including national authorities, the private sector as well as associations and organizations of artists and cultural professionals.

Decent Work Areas

- Decent working time.
- Adequate earning and productive work.
- Combining work, family, and personal life.
- Equal opportunity and treatment in employment.
- A safe work environment.
- The extension and adaptation of social security to workers in the creative economy.
- Strengthened social dialogue, and
- Improved employers' and workers' representation in the sectors

PEACEFUL SOCIETIES THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Botswana

Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists

2024, UNESCO supported Botswana's annual observance of World Press Freedom Day in Gaborone, attended by representatives from the EU Delegation, SADC, and governments of Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The event also launched the 2024 State of Press Freedom in Southern Africa Report, which includes data on SDG indicators 16.10.1 and 16.10.2. The report and a study on media viability highlighted media freedom issues and the safety of journalists, helping to inform policy discussions and international cooperation in Botswana and the region.

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and the Federation of Southern African Journalists

UNESCO ROSorganized a three-day training of trainers (ToT) for 25 people, including Botswana journalists and leaders of the journalists' union (from Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi, Angola and Mozambique) the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the Africa President of the IFJ, the President of the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ) in Gaborone (10-13 September). An important milestone of the ToT was the creation from the organisations reported above of the: "Action Plan on Combatting Disinformation and Misinformation through Media and Information Literacy". The event focused on bridging digital divides, addressing misinformation, and promoting media ethics, including the ethics of generative AI. The training also led to the establishment of the Federation of Southern African Journalists (FESAJ), which aims to support and unify journalists in the region.

Digital Transformation – Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In September, UNESCO convened a high-level panel on Artificial Intelligence for Information Accessibility (AI4IA) in Botswana to discuss the inclusive use of AI across Southern Africa. The event was part of a broader effort to promote digital transformation and open-source technologies, with Botswana playing a central role in advancing AI for information accessibility.

PEACEFUL SOCIETIES THROUGH COMMUNICATION

eSwatini

Press Freedom and World Radio Day (WRD)
In February 2024, Eswatini celebrated World Radio Day with participation from academia, civil society, and the media sector. The event focused on showcasing the evolution of radio in Eswatini and its contributions to national development, education, and democracy. This was followed by a multi-agency event organized by UNESCO and the National Commission, which examined current issues such as media self-regulation and the impact of digital media on press freedom.

Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists
On World Press Freedom Day, Eswatini organized a dual event focused on media self-regulation. Participants from media, government, and international organizations discussed strategies for preserving journalistic freedom and accountability. The event highlighted the importance of a free press in democracy, with insights from Namibia and South African media self-regulation, and aligned with the theme "A Press for the Planet.

Press Freedom Report
Eswatini participated in UNESCO's Southern Africa Press Freedom Report, contributing valuable data on press freedom and related SDG 16.10 indicators. The report assessed the state of press freedom in Eswatini highlighting ongoing human rights violations and outdated laws in Eswatini but notes some improvements in press freedom and potential new legislation to support journalists

Radio continues to be a vital medium for sharing information in languages we understand, reaching even the most remote communities. Its accessibility and wide reach make it indispensable in ensuring that our nations stay informed. In an evolving digital era, radio remains as relevant as ever, bridging gaps and empowering societies with knowledge. **Ms. Lwandle Simelane- Eswatini National Commission for UNESCO: Secretary General**

PEACEFUL SOCIETIES THROUGH COMMUNICATION

LESOTHO

UNESCO continues to promote freedom of expression, media development, through ongoing initiatives, empasizing the importance of digital transformation and the preservation of documentary heritage preservation. The country in 2024 celebrated World Press Freedom Day and World Radio Day, focusing on strengthening community radios and their role in local information and education. UNESCO is also engaging with the Ministry of Information to develop a digital transformation and AI competency framework for civil servants. Last year a Lesotho Advocate attended the All Africa Judges and Jurists Summit in Nairobi, which addressed AI and the rule of law. The Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA Lesotho) with support from UNESCO, is implementing a project to draft a **National Media and Information Literacy (MIL) policy.**

MALAWI

In Malawi, UNESCO remains committed to media development through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) project on Strengthening the Community Media Sector for Sustainable Operations and Stability. Launched in the last quarter of the year, the project, in collaboration with the Malawi Media Council, aims to enhance the capacity of over 230 media managers and practitioners from at least 48 community radio stations, ensuring their long-term sustainability and operational resilience. In view of the upcoming Malawi 2025 Presidential elections, UNESCO continues supporting though capacity-building initiatives for media practitioners, focusing on election reporting, journalist safety, and addressing disinformation and misinformation.

PEACEFUL SOCIETIES THROUGH COMMUNICATION

MOZAMBIQUE

UNESCO support during the election cycle has continued with the UNESCO co-organized a training on ethical standards in electoral journalism to support free, fair, and plural elections. In collaboration with UNDP, OHCHR, and national partners, a comprehensive initiative on Ethical and Professional Media Election Reporting in the Digital Age was implemented. A total of 35 trainers from 11 provinces were trained, who then supported the training of 60 journalists from the northern and central regions. Covering seven provinces, the training strengthened ethical journalism practices for electoral coverage, reaching approximately 16 million potential voters and ensuring media presence at around 3,000 polling stations. As part of its ongoing support for the electoral cycle, UNESCO, in partnership with MISA Mozambique, has launched a new project aimed at strengthening collaboration between the media and human rights institutions in election observation and coverage. This initiative focuses on building the capacity of journalists and stakeholders to enhance informed, ethical, and rights-based reporting during electoral processes.

SOUTH AFRICA

UNESCO in South Africa continues to advance efforts in media regulation, self-regulation, and freedom of expression online. The African Media Councils (AMC) Workshop, held in Cape Town in May, focused on media regulation and self-regulation across Africa. A key outcome was the establishment of the **Network of Independent Media Councils in Africa (NIMCA)**, a strategic initiative aimed at strengthening self-regulation and advancing professional journalism standards across the continent. The workshop, also included a UNESCO-led session on the **Social Media 4 Peace Phase II** project, emphasising the need for collaborative efforts to tackle harmful online content and promote peace through multi-stakeholder engagement. The SM4P project will be a three-year project starting in 2025.

PEACEFUL SOCIETIES THROUGH COMMUNICATION

ZAMBIA

UNESCO continued to advocate for **freedom of expression and universal access to information** in Zambia, supporting key annual commemorations such as World Press Freedom Day, World Radio Day, and the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI). UNESCO also facilitated the implementation of national surveys on the State of Press Freedom in Southern Africa, which contributed to the publication of the annual report on press freedom in the region. In response to rising concerns about hate speech, UNESCO contributed to the drafting of **Zambia's Plan of Action to counter hate speech,** which is currently being finalized. The organization also collaborated with the Media Self-Regulation Council of Zambia to reinforce media self-regulation mechanisms, promoting peace, democracy, and good governance. UNESCO remains committed to supporting Zambia's media landscape, including media development through the strengthening of community radios.
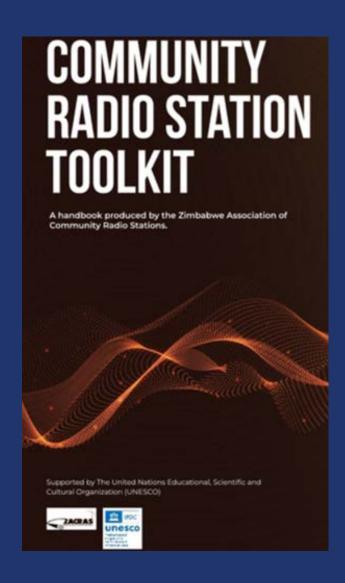
ZIMBABWE

UNESCO continues to support the promotion of **press freedom, access to information,** and media development in Zimbabwe through key initiatives, including the 2024 World Radio Day and the International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI). These commemorations highlight the importance of free, independent media and the role of information in empowering individuals and communities. Additionally, UNESCO continues fostering **media development** through the establishment of a community radio station at the Tongogara Refugee Settlement in Zimbabwe, alongside capacity-building activities and the provision of equipment for Garawha community radio station. UNESCO's media development efforts are further strengthened through its collaboration with the science Sector in the establishment of **community-based early warning systems.**

PEACEFUL SOCIETIES THROUGH COMMUNICATION

ZIMBABWE

UNESCO's support to the country continues through its partnership with the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS) in conducting a nationwide assessment of 21 campus and community radio stations with funding from the IPDC. The survey examined their progress since licensing and identified strategies for improved sustainability. The outcomes of this initiative include two key publications: **"Best Practice Approaches for Community and Campus Radio Stations"** and the **"Community Radio Station Toolkit,"** which will serve as guiding frameworks for policymakers and stakeholders in establishing and operationalising community broadcasting.

COMMUNITY MEDIA POLICY FRAMEWORK

Namibia

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) with the support of UNESCO finalized the draft **Community Media Policy Framework,** initially drafted in 2021 and reviewed in 2023. The Framework underwent technical review, resulting in valuable feedback and recommendations for the 2024 update process. MICT and UNESCO initiated two stakeholder consultation workshops. The first meeting was held on 14 – 15 August 2024, with the participation of thirty-two (32) representatives from community media organizations. This collaborative initiative reviewed the current state of community media across Namibia and addressed new and emerging concerns and opportunities. Various key Stakeholders, including Communication Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN), Deutsche Welle (DW) Akademie, Namibia Community Broadcasters Network (NCBN), Namibia Press Agency (NAMPA) and the Namibia Society of Composers and Authors of Music (NASCAM) were consulttaed in the process. These engagements led to the successful finalization of the Community Media Policy Framework, which is now scheduled for submission to the National Planning Commission (NPC). Link to full article: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/namibia-concludes-consultations-finalize-community-media-policy-framework

To date, the community media landscape in Namibia is characterized by the presence of seventeen (17) community radios. In print media, there are only two community publications and no community television broadcast stations, which can be attributed to the capital-intensive cost of establishing and successfully running such an enterprise at a community scale.

PROMOTING HISTORY FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING

Regional

In November 2024 UNESCO supported multistakeholder dialogue, bringing together policymakers, curriculum planners and designers from Ministries of Education in Southern Africa, academics and researchers, youth leaders and civil society organizations, to take stock of progress made towards the integration knowledge on Southern Africa Liberation History (SALH) into education systems. The dialogue provided an opportunity for sharing and documenting best practices on the integration of teaching and learning materials into respective education systems in Southern Africa. Some examples include a) **Namibia**, where the design of history curriculum is meant to promote democratic principles and practices, and develop learners' social responsibility; b) **Zimbabwe** where a Heritage-Based Curriculum (HBC) has been introduced, streamlining its focus on six key learning areas; c) **Lesotho** which is reviving the SeMoshoeshoe philosophical framework through the Moshoeshoe Institute of the National University of Lesotho to promote the virtues, values, and ethos of His Majesty Morena Moshoeshoe I, and reshape the mindset of every Mosotho individual towards national unity, peaceful conflict resolution, servant leadership, and patriotism; and d) **Tanzania** (a SADC Member State) where the Ujamaa philosophy of social justice and community cooperation has now been embedded into the school curriculum.

The launch of a Youth As Researchers (YAR) initiative to engage and build youth capacities, is an important milestone designed to bridge the intergenerational divide in the transfer of knowledge on the liberation history. YAR packages it in ways that help address contemporary social challenges, including racism, xenophobia and exclusion, while also promoting intercultural dialogue. YAR will therefore serve as a platform to reach the broader youth demographic in the formal education systems (schools, universities) and informal education (community programmes, social media campaigns, mentor-protege relationships and peer-to-peer learning). This effort will be supported by a network of mentors comprising academia and practitioners, to guide the youth in producing new knowledge on the region's history for social good. The establishment by UNESCO of a new UNITWIN Network on the General History of Africa in 2025 will further complement and strengthen this component of the project.

STRENGTHENING OF DISABILITY COORDINATION

Zimbabwe

UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA and technical partners UN Women and UNICEF, with support from the Global Disability Fund (formerly UNPRPD) supported the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to develop a national framework to strengthen coordination mechanisms aimed at implementing the country's National Disability Policy and developed the 1st Costed Action Plan to support implementtaion. In addition, five knowledge tools to strengthen service delivery for persons with disabilities were developed within the framework of this project. Support was further provided to promote partnership building among duty bearers and rights holders on how to contribute to systems strengthening through adoption on the Compliant Budgeting approaches for sustainable resource allocation for the National Disability Policy.

The Resident Coordinator, Mr. Edward Kallon meets with Organisations of Persons Disabilities on strengthing disability inclusion in the UN Common Country Analysis and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

Nyasha Nhau Ambassador of the African Union Disability Chapter in Zimbabwe, Member of the National Coordination Committee for the Implemention of the National Disability Policy at the first quarterly Meeting in 2024 .
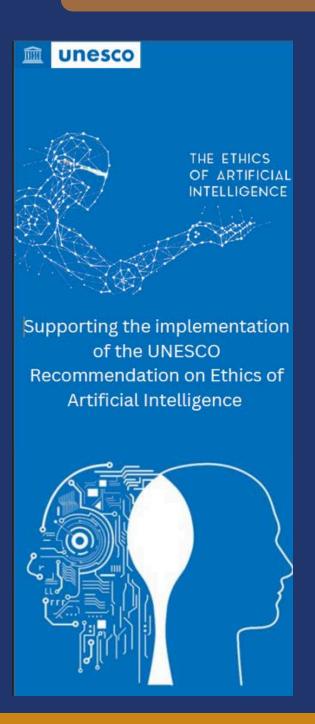
Strategic Objective 4:

Fostering a technological environment through the development and dissemination of knowledge and skills and the development of ethical standards

IMPLEMENTATION OF AI ETHICS READINESS ASSESSMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Regional

By end of 2024 UNESCO had successfully supported finalization of two high quality Readiness Assessment Methodology reports in two countries (Mozambique & South Africa), as part of a six-country pilot project launched Southern Africa in 2023. The other four countries include Namibia and Zimbabwe which are at an advanced stage and expected to be finalized by the end of first quarter of 2025, along with Botswana and Malawi, expected to be completed during the second quarter of 2025.

THE ETHICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Supporting the implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation on Ethics of Artificial Intelligence
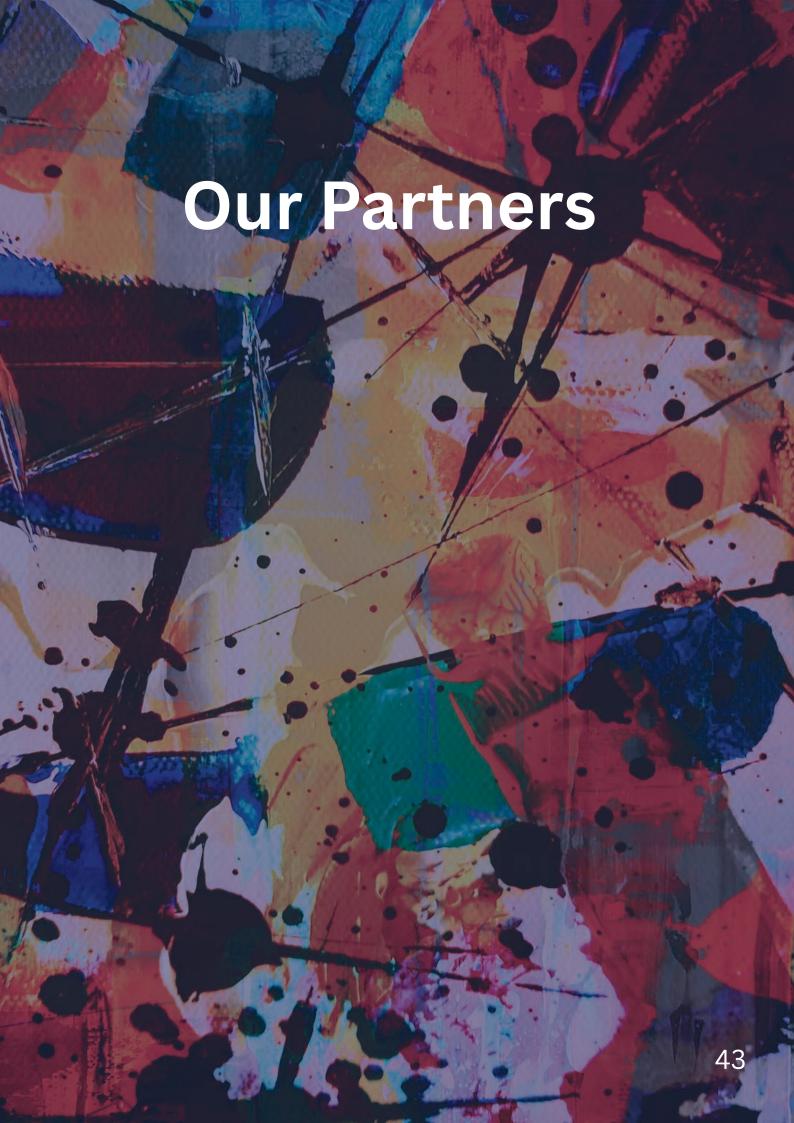
Mozambique
A major finding from the AI RAM report for Mozambique indicates that the country is in the early stages of AI adoption and is working towards establishing governance frameworks that align with UNESCO's Ethics of AI recommendations.
https://www.unesco.org/ethics-ai/en/mozambique.

South Africa
Findings from South Africa's AI RAM report suggest that the country's AI ecosystem is at a pivotal stage of development. Notwithstanding the absence of a national AI strategy, South Africa's Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (PC4IR) report of 2020, has guided much of the digital policy direction.
https://www.unesco.org/ethics-ai/en/southafrica.

Our Partners

UN SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

UNESCO's Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) had a productive year in 2024, contributing to the UN system across nine countries: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The Regional Office actively participated in various UN structures and frameworks including to policy influence, programme implementation, and technical support, demonstrating robust engagement within the UN system.

Highlights

- Contributed to the development of Lesotho's Resource Mobilization Strategy (2024-2028) and similarly in Zimbabwe, is contributing to the development of the Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Strategy.
- Common Country Analysis for Malawi, Eswatini. Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique.
- Ongoing support to new Eswatini UNSDCF commissioned by the RCO and UNCT.
- Took part in the Lesotho and Mozambique Universal Periodic Reviews.
- Supported the establishment of mechanisms for implementation of the National Disability Policies and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Eswatini and Zimbabwe e.g. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf000039018 0

Our work cut across several domains, a testament to the strength of our mandate in the areas of Science, Education, Culture, Communication & Information and Social & Human Sciences. These domains include disability inclusion, climate action and environment, gender, health and education, youth, media and information, cultural and creative sectors and post disaster and human rights.

Opportunities

- Expanded UNPRPD Engagement: Leverage for disability and human rights funding.
- Cross-sectoral Proposals: Tackle complex issues like HIV, gender inequality, and youth engagement via joint funding.
- Data Collaboration: Expand central data systems and shared analytics for policy planning.
- Specialization Leverage: Use regional influence and technical specialization to scale programme impact

UNESCO's Unique Contributions

- Education Leadership: Lead role in SDG 4 – lifelong, inclusive education.
- Freedom of Expression & Media: Custodianship of SDGs 16.10.1 & 16.10.2.
- Digital Transformation: AI governance, readiness assessments, and digital competency standards.
- Climate Action, Youth, and Disability Rights: Deep involvement in health, sports, and inclusion-focused initiatives.
- Cultural Heritage: Stewardship of tangible and intangible heritage

UN SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS AND CONTRIBUTIONS: SOME EXAMPLES

Eswatini
• Partnered with UNICEF and UNFPA on a UNPRPD Disability Inclusion joint proposal which is now being implemented.
• Revised Secondary School Life Skills Curriculum with UNICEF.
• Supported pregnancy prevention and management policy dissemination with UNICEF.
• With UNFPA developed instructional materials and reviewed foundational education for health .
• Supported the UNCT to host the World Press Freedom Day and supported media self-regulation dialogue.

Mozambique

• Co-chairing Pillar 1 (Human Development) of the UNSDCF 2024-2026 with UNICEF; previously co-chaired Pillar 4 (Peacebuilding).
• In partnership with UN Habitat, implemented Resilient Recovery Project in IBO and Buzi Districts.
• Part of the "Action for Girls and Young Women" joint programme with UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women to implement Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) (2024–2028).

Zambia

• Part of the Sub-Regional Spotlight Initiative (2025–2029) Promotion of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Toward the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence Programme with UNFPA, UNDP and IOM.
• Implementing the Facility for Action for Climate Empowerment- Nationally Determined Contributions with FAO and UNITAR.

Lesotho
• Collaborated with FAO (lead), UNDP, and UNICEF on a joint concept under the AfDB Climate Action Window which was successful and now under a full-fledged proposal development
•   The project will focus on building agricultural resilience for food and nutrition security including digital climate advisory services.It will enhance food security and climate resilience in Lesotho. UNESCO brings its disability inclusion expertise to the intervention.

Namibia

• With UNICEF, provided input to National Development Plan (NDP6) and the Teaching Profession Bill.
• Ongoing collaboration with UNDP, WFP, FAO on the SANIED Climate Resilience Project for the Green Climate Fund to achieve resilience to climate change for Namibia's economy, built and biological systems through robust adaptation planning.
• Supported Open EMIS system development and ICT integration in education with UNICEF

Zimbabwe

• Contributed to a Multisectoral Adolescent Pregnancy Framework via UN Youth Joint Team.
• Joint efforts with ILO for formalizing creative sectors under the Creatives for Development initiative.
• With UNICEF on the GPE System Transformation & Capacity Grants for education efficiency.
• Helped establish early warning systems in Chipinge District via Ndau FM with UNDP.
• Joined UNDP and UNFPA in a UNPRPD Joint Programme that will be implemented in 2025

COOPERATION WITH NATIONAL COMMISSIONS FOR UNESCO

UNESCO has a global network of 199 national cooperating bodies known as National Commissions for UNESCO. They are part of the overall constitutional architecture of the organization and play a key role in coordinating partnerships with national partners and in the advancement of UNESCO's objectives and implementation of UNESCO's programme. They support consultations, liaison and information, and mobilizing of resources for UNESCO.
https://pax.unesco.org/countries/NationalCommissions.html.
The UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa has a vibrant relationship with the National Commisions. In 2024, the office disseminated a survey to ellicit feedback and gather priorities for 2025.

Summary Findings

The 2024 survey highlighted the positive impact of the Regional Office's meetings with National Commissions in Southern Africa. **71% of respondents expressed satisfaction** and 88% felt **seen and heard.** 78% of respondents **valued information sharing,** and 67% **appreciated the continuity of dialogue.** However, there were **areas for improvement** cited, in **communication, follow-up actions,** and **virtual participation**. Suggestions provided such as enhancing virtual connectivity and **customizing discussions to fit local needs**, are instrumental in shaping future meetings to better address the needs and priorities of the National Commissions in Southern Africa.

Looking Ahead

Going into 2025, several thematic areas were flagged for prioritisation. These are support to girls and women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education programmes and Science, Technology and Innovation **(STI)** careers. Strengthening Cultural Creative Industries and enhanced exchange among the National Commissions via skillshare and exchange programmes. Follow up on the UN Transforming Education Summit, developing regional competency frameworks, and educator capacity building in digital education content, and digital learning platforms. Education for Sustainable Development, redress of Climate Change and consequent impacts on biodiversity and water . Technical and Vocational Education and Training, learning outcomes, domestication of ratified conventions, capacity building for project proposal writing, resource mobilization, Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation and youth employment. Redress of gender-based violence, need for gender equality, and partnerships for all programmes were also advocated.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLIC SECTOR BODIES

Partner	Areas of Cooperation
Population Services International (PSI, Female Student Network Trust (FSNT), Student and Youth Working on Reproductive Health Action Team (SAYWHAT), Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI), Katswe Sistahood	Health Education
Technical Education Vocational Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSI), Mari stopes International , Restless Development Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), Generation Alive Zambia, Copper Rose Zambia , SRHR Africa Trust (SAT) Zambia	Health Education
University of Zambia, Chalimbana University, Nkwame Nkrumah University, Mulungushi University, Copperbelt University, Mukuba University, National University of Science and Technology, Great Zimbabwe University, Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Harare Institute of Technology, University of Pretoria	Health Education, Return and Restitution of Cultural Property
Media Institute for Southern Africa	Press Freedom, Safety of Journalists, Elections
The Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education	Development & implementation of quality assurance capacity building programme
Education Development Trust	Research and Foundational literacy
Save the Children , Solon Foundation	Foundational literacy
Southern African Universities Association	Quality Assurance in higher education in the SADC
Federation of Organisations of Disabled People in Zimbabwe (FODPZ)	Disability Inclusion
National Association of Societies for the Care Of The Handicapped (NASCOH)	Disability Inclusion
Tsuro Trust , Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC), Red Cross Mozambique, Red Cross Zimbabwe	Climate Action

MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PRIVATE SECTOR

Partner	Area of Cooperation
African Union	Health Education, Return and Restitution of Cultural Property
Southern African Development Community	Press Freedom , Global Citizenship Education and Southern African Liberation History , Health Education, Development of SADC Higher Education Strategy/ Higher Education Database
Private Sector	
Old Mutual Group Zimbabwe , Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe, CABS Bank Zimbabwe, Zimnat Insurance Company Zimbabwe, Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe	Renewable Energy

FINANCING PARTNERS