



Teaching to prevent atrocity crimes

A guide for teachers in Africa

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SHORT SUMMARY

Why teaching about atrocity crimes in Africa matters

The legacies of atrocity crimes such as the transatlantic slave trade and slavery, colonialism, and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda continue to affect societies across Africa. Through teaching about these histories and the example of the Holocaust, learners can be encouraged to acknowledge the historic injustices and understand the dangers of hate speech and prejudice.

Teaching the history of atrocity crimes can build learners' knowledge and skills, and can help to prevent violence by cultivating solidarity, knowledge and respect for other cultures and identities. Teachers require support in this task. This guide provides teachers with relevant subject and pedagogical knowledge to meet the challenges of teaching about atrocity crimes.

This guide enables teachers in Africa to strengthen a culture of peace in their classrooms, schools and communities, through fostering their learners' abilities to engage respectfully and responsibly in discussions about difficult or sensitive pasts. It aims to build teachers' skills and confidence to teach about histories of atrocity while nurturing human rights values and behaviours.

Education can
counter hate speech
and empower
learners to say
no to hate



*"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women
it is in the minds of men and women that the defences
of peace must be constructed"*



United Nations



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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

No country has been spared the scourge of prejudice that lies at the heart of atrocity crimes. The legacies of violent pasts affect all societies. In Africa the brutality of the transatlantic trade and trafficking in human beings, colonialism, civil war and racism wreaked havoc on the lives of those living on the continent. The legacies of such histories continue to shape the contemporary terrain.

Ignoring the past, however challenging, makes societies vulnerable to injustices continuing. Education about the causes and consequences of atrocity crimes can build learners' critical thinking skills, strengthen their resilience to violent extremism, raise awareness of the warning signs of future violence, and suggest courses of action to counter the roots of hateful ideologies.

Supporting teachers to educate about the past is a critical component in building communities based on the values espoused in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of UNESCO. Teachers can facilitate their learners' understanding of their country's past and help learners to respond to its legacies and current challenges with the skills and values of global citizens.

Educating about atrocity crimes, including genocide, is not easy. Histories of violence are particularly complex and need to be taught with care. Teachers must be supported with accurate subject knowledge, appropriate pedagogical practices for teaching about violent pasts, approaches that are sensitive to the context of the teacher and learners, and encourage the teacher's self-awareness of their relationship to the past, including where they may be vulnerable to bias and prejudices.

This publication is the first of its kind. Developed by the United Nations Department of Global Communications and UNESCO, in partnership with the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa, it provides support to educators in the African region teaching about atrocity crimes. The guide draws on best pedagogical practice, the work of historians and educational experts, input from teachers surveyed in Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe and the responses of students in Kenya, Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

The guide is designed to build the confidence of teachers; to inspire them to use teaching and learning approaches that deepen learners' understanding of the histories and impact of atrocity crimes; to equip them to counter the denial and distortion of history, and to help their learners recognize the value of learning about the past to protect human rights. Education to prevent atrocity crimes is a critical component of the strategy of the United Nations to build a world that is just, where all can live in peace and with dignity.



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Introduction

This teachers' guide was developed by UNESCO and the United Nations in cooperation with the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA). It contributes to UNESCO's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2022-2029)¹ that includes a specific Flagship Programme on the General History of Africa (GHA) and programme on Global Citizenship Education (Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education), which includes programmes to address violent pasts through education, notably the Holocaust, and to prevent genocide.

The guide is closely based on the UNESCO policy guide on "Education about the Holocaust and preventing genocide" (2017). It further builds on relevant materials for African teachers developed by UNESCO/IICBA, Facing History and Ourselves, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Shikaya, among others.

To ensure the guide is contextually relevant and useful, it was developed in close cooperation with a wide range of education stakeholders on the African continent and informed by consultations with regional and international experts. The development of the guide was supported by a curriculum review and needs assessment conducted in Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. It includes input from over 100 teachers, from different backgrounds and teaching experiences, working in diverse environments and conditions. Insights gathered during these consultations are reflected in the document.

¹ UNESCO. 2022. The Operational Strategy for Priority Africa 2022-2029, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382928?posInSet=2&queryId=db56c800-9223-41c7-aa14-18d20d2d158d>



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Rationale

This guide offers relevant materials, resources and training to support teachers to teach about violent pasts. Countries around the world, including those in Africa, have experienced atrocity crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. These severe violations of human rights have left devastating legacies. How societies deal with their pasts has profound implications for the present and the future, and the chances of building sustainable peace.

Education can play an important role in addressing violent pasts and preventing future atrocity crimes. When focused on *local or national* violent pasts, education provides learners with a more nuanced understanding of their country's history and their own identities. It strengthens their critical thinking towards national and local memory of the past, and related contemporary discourses. By exploring atrocity crimes *across contexts*, learners can build an understanding of the mechanisms and conditions that fuel extreme violence and can be made aware of possible warning signs which are critical for the prevention of future atrocity crimes. By developing learners' historical consciousness about a violent past, processes of historical justice and reconciliation can be fostered. Education about atrocity crimes strengthens societies against hate and violence and contributes to long-term peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes.

Teaching about atrocity crimes, be it in the context of history, civics education, or social science classes, implies teaching about particularly complex processes. It confronts teachers with the task of navigating related political debates, conflicting narratives about history, and misconceptions with their learners. It may entail addressing learners' prejudices, assumptions and falsehoods, particularly in divided societies. Besides, teachers will need to be alert to their own biases and guided and supported through possible trauma if the history they are teaching is lived experience or interrelated with the history of their own family or community.



The aim of the guide

This guide is designed for school teachers in African countries, who seek to introduce or strengthen education about atrocity crimes in their teaching practice.

It provides flexible guidance on how to develop, prepare and teach lessons on atrocity crimes that resonate with local contexts, that are tailored to national curricula and educational contexts, and ultimately contribute to peacebuilding and the prevention of future atrocity crimes.

The guide seeks to

- Develop teachers' understanding of key concepts, facts and debates on atrocity crimes;
- Advance teachers' skills to navigate the complexities of these phenomena and facilitate classroom conversations around such topics;
- Familiarize teachers with appropriate pedagogies and approaches to deal with these violent topics in the classroom.

The guide is written for teachers with varying experiences, professionally and personally. The guide takes into consideration that some teachers may be more familiar with the topic than others.

It acknowledges that teachers themselves, along with their students, may have lived through atrocity crimes, may be experiencing intergenerational trauma, or be living with a sense of guilt due to violence inflicted by their forebears. It also guides teachers in reviewing local curricula frameworks to identify adequate entry points to teach about atrocity crimes, integrating the topics into already existing structures rather than adding to them. Teachers are encouraged to use this guide to help develop their own informed approach to teaching about atrocity crimes, appropriate to their context and learner's realities.

Structure of the guide

The guide comprises six chapters,

providing a broad introduction to atrocity crimes, outlining teaching objectives and principles, and presenting teaching strategies and practices:

-
- Chapter 1** outlines the value of teaching about atrocity crimes in Africa. It indicates how education about atrocity crimes can create opportunities to approach traumatic histories close to home, promote human rights and the skills and values of global citizenship, to prevent future instances of atrocity crimes.
-
- Chapter 2** clarifies understanding by providing legal definitions of atrocity crimes, such as genocide and related historical examples.
-
- Chapter 3** offers guidance on identifying opportunities to introduce a study of atrocity crimes by i) contextualizing education about atrocity crimes within existing global educational frameworks, specifically Global Citizenship Education (GCED), ii) pinpointing possible entry points within existing national curriculum frameworks and policies, and iii) suggesting additional teachable moments, presented for instance by international and national commemoration days.
-
- Chapter 4** proposes several teaching objectives and learning outcomes of education about atrocity crimes, aligning them to GCED's domains of learning.
-
- Chapter 5** introduces several teaching principles and considerations that underpin the study of atrocity crimes in classrooms.
-
- Chapter 6** concludes the guide by drawing attention to opportunities to extend a study of atrocity crimes beyond the classroom through whole school and community-oriented approaches.
-
- The annex** offers pedagogies and practices to teach about atrocity crimes in various contexts. It includes references and links to further resources complementing this guide. It provides access to accurate sources of information about histories of atrocity crime.
-

Chapter 1

Why teach about atrocity crimes in Africa?

This chapter outlines how a regional approach to teaching about atrocity crimes can be particularly effective.

a. Teaching to deal with violent pasts and their legacies

Like in many other regions of the world, societies across Africa have experienced periods of conflict, violence, and persecution, which have left them traumatised and fractured. Such histories pose important questions for teachers dedicated to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

By examining local cases of atrocity crimes, learners have the opportunity to inquire into topics such as colonial power structures and their legacies, along with the causes and impacts of hate speech and violent extremism, and advance peacebuilding within their own communities and across the continent.

Such education does not have to be exclusively centred on local cases of violent pasts. Teaching and learning about atrocity crimes, regionally and internationally, can offer an opportunity to introduce a constructive engagement with national or local histories of violence. Exploring well-studied atrocity crimes that took place in other regions, like the genocide of the Jewish people (known as the “Holocaust” or “Shoah”) in Europe or the genocide in Cambodia, can present entry points for learners to examine violent national or local histories that remain unaddressed. It can provide the psychological, emotional and historical distance that allows them to develop a critical lens and language for exploring similar events within their local context, provide an opportunity for dialogue and questions and a motivation to take action to enhance peaceful coexistence within their communities and beyond.

b. Teaching for the promotion of human rights and global citizenship

Studying histories of atrocity crimes can help learners understand how and why these crimes occur. This understanding can illustrate the great danger of disavowing human rights and can stimulate critical thinking about the roles and responsibilities of individuals and institutions in relation to human rights, both in the past and today.

For example, cases such as the Holocaust and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda raise questions about the root causes and structures that led people to turn on their neighbours. The histories also include examples of individuals who resisted and who reached out to offer safety to those being persecuted. There are examples of those who fought against oppression and to create more just futures. Learning can nourish an appreciation for human rights, encouraging learners to become active advocates for their protection and promotion.

Exploring these histories and their broader contexts can support young people to contribute as global citizens to just and peaceful societies at local, national and global levels. It can prompt reflection on the dangers of prejudice, discrimination and dehumanization, promoting respect for diversity in one's own community and beyond.

c. Teaching for the prevention of atrocity crimes

Many African countries today continue to be at risk of atrocity crimes, but such crimes are not inevitable. Indeed, teachers have a powerful opportunity to strengthen awareness in learners to identify and oppose warning signs of genocide and other atrocity crimes early on.

When young people can identify the societal risks posed by prejudice, hate speech, systematic discrimination and exclusion of minoritized groups, they are better prepared to recognize and act against dangerous trends. Through reflection on their own biases, as well as critical analysis and opposition to propaganda, hate speech and violent extremist ideologies, learners are more resilient and better prepared to confront violence at its roots. At the same time, learners can draw upon historical strategies of resistance and collective action to bring about positive change in their societies.

Chapter 2

Key concepts and definitions

This chapter explains what atrocity crimes are and why definitions matter.

a. Atrocity crimes including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes

Definitions matter. Accurate and clear definitions are essential to ensure a common understanding of what constitutes an atrocity crime and provide a crucial basis for further discussions. By providing learners with such definitions, they can learn to differentiate between these crimes, understand their distinct nature as socio-political phenomena, and not to establish a “hierarchy of suffering” between them.

Teachers may choose to draw on their existing expertise to support learning of these concepts. Some activities explained in Chapter Two include:

- finding and categorizing examples of each concept
- listing essential and non-essential attributes of each concept
- creating mind maps to articulate thinking around each concept

The boxes below provide definitions of atrocity crimes as they appear in international conventions and laws. The definitions were developed in response to cases of violations of human rights and today constitute the bedrock of international understanding on these complex phenomena.²

Atrocity crimes and mass atrocities

The term “atrocity crimes” refers to three legally defined international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.³ The term “atrocity crimes” has been extended to include ethnic cleansing which is not defined as an independent crime under international law.⁴

2 United Nations Office for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, *When to refer to a situation as “genocide”*, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/GuidanceNote-When%20to%20refer%20to%20a%20situation%20as%20genocide.pdf>

3 The definitions of the crimes can be found in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Additional Protocols, and the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, among other treaties.

4 In 2005, United Nations Member States made a commitment to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, a principle referred to as the “Responsibility to Protect”. In this context, the term “atrocity crimes” has been extended to include ethnic cleansing which, while not defined as an independent crime under international law, includes acts that are serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that may themselves amount to one of the recognized atrocity crimes, in particular crimes against humanity. For further information, see: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>

Genocide

The term “genocide” derives from “the ancient Greek word *genos* (kin, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing)”. It was coined by the American lawyer Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish refugee during the Second World War, to denote “a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.”⁵

“Genocide” was codified as an international crime in 1948 with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Article 2 defines it as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide has been adopted by 153 States. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has repeatedly stated that the Convention embodies principles that are part of general customary international law. This means that whether or not States have ratified the Genocide Convention, they are all bound as a matter of law by the principle that genocide is a crime prohibited under international law.⁶

Other than other atrocity crimes, the crime of genocide is defined by the special *intent* to destroy a group as a whole.⁷

Crimes against humanity

There is uncertainty around the origins of the term “crimes against humanity” and the context in which it was first developed. Some scholars⁸ point to the use of this term (or very similar terms) as early as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, particularly in the context of slavery and the trafficking of enslaved Africans, and to describe atrocities associated with European colonialism in Africa and elsewhere such as, for example, the atrocities committed by Leopold II of Belgium in the Congo Free State.⁹

Other scholars point to the declaration issued in 1915 by the Allied governments (France, Great Britain and Russia) condemning the mass killing of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, to be the origin of the use of the term as the label for a category of international crimes. The current understandings of the concept owe much to the work of the eminent lawyer of Polish-Jewish origin Hersch Lauterpacht.

Today, the concept of crimes against humanity is legally defined in its most comprehensive terms, in the 1998 Rome Statute.¹⁰

5 R. Lemkin. 1944. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*.

6 Website of the United Nations Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>

7 The Rome Statute incorporates the definition of the Genocide convention.

8 For example, W. Schabas. 2012. *Unimaginable Atrocities – Justice, Politics, and Rights at the War Crimes Tribunals*, Oxford University Press. p. 51-53.

9 For example, M. Cherif Bassiouni. 1999. *Crimes Against Humanity in International Criminal Law*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. p.62

10 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/rome-statute-international-criminal-court>

The Rome Statute established the International Criminal Court (ICC). Article 7 defines crimes against humanity as “Acts that are part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack”. Such acts include “(a) Murder; (b) Extermination; (c) Enslavement; (d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population; (e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; (f) Torture; (g) Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; (h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender... or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court; (i) Enforced disappearance of persons; (j) The crime of apartheid; (k) Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.”

War crimes

The term “war crimes” refers to crimes committed against a diversity of victims, either combatants or non-combatants, during armed conflict. In international armed conflicts, victims include those specifically protected by the four 1949 Geneva Conventions, i.e. (1) the wounded and sick in armed forces in the field; (2) the wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of armed forces at sea; (3) prisoners of war; and (4) civilian persons. In contrast to genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes can be committed against a diversity of victims, either combatants or non-combatants.

The concept of war crimes developed with the codification of international humanitarian law in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Today, war crimes are codified by the 1949 Geneva Conventions and 1977 Additional Protocol I; and Article 8 of the 1998 Rome Statute of the ICC¹¹.

Generally, war crimes may constitute: a) crimes against persons requiring particular protection; b) crimes against those providing humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations; c) crimes against property and other rights; and d) prohibited methods of warfare (e.g. the use of landmines, chemical weapons etc.).

Some examples of prohibited acts include: murder; mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; taking of hostages; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population; intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historical monuments or hospitals; pillaging; rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy or any other form of sexual violence; conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities.¹²

Ethnic cleansing

As ethnic cleansing has not been recognized as an independent crime under international law, there is no precise definition of this concept or the exact acts which qualify as such. *The Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)* uses the term to describe “a purposeful policy by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.” The expression was coined during the Yugoslav wars in Europe in the early 1990s, where it was used as a euphemism to describe the forced displacement and persecution of entire groups.

11 United Nations Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, *Definitions: war crimes*, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml>

12 United Nations Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect, *Definitions: war crimes*, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml>

Chapter 3

Entry points to educating about atrocity crimes

Teachers may want to place teaching about atrocity crimes within their current curriculum and educational priorities. This section offers entry points and practical support for integrating the study of atrocity crimes in a way that complements teachers' existing efforts.

a. Contextualizing atrocity crimes education within global education frameworks

United Nations and UNESCO educational frameworks, including Global Citizenship Education (GCED), Peace Education, Human Rights Education, Reconciliation Education, and Education about the Holocaust and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, can help to integrate meaningfully the teaching and learning about atrocity crimes in secondary school education systems.

UNESCO's framework for GCED encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need for securing a world that is more just, peaceful, inclusive and sustainable. GCED has three conceptual dimensions. The cognitive dimension concerns the learners' acquisition of knowledge, understanding and critical thinking. The socio-emotional dimension relates to the learners' sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity. The behavioural dimension expects the learners to act responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world. (UNESCO. 2015. *Global Citizenship Education-Topics and learning objectives*)

Education about the Holocaust refers to efforts, in formal and non-formal settings, to teach about the Holocaust. **Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust** addresses didactics and learning, under the larger umbrella of education about the Holocaust, which also comprises curricula and textbooks studies.

Genocide studies refers to research and education about patterns and trends in the phenomenon of genocide and/or about the causes, nature and impact of particular instances of genocide.

Peace Education promotes a Culture of Peace, which according to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/52/13 (1998) consists of "values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society".

Human Rights Education comprises “activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing, inter alia, to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills, and understanding, and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights”.¹³

Reconciliation Education is a methodology “to promote tolerance, inclusiveness, and ability to deal with conflict non-violently, and the capacity to think critically and question assumptions that could again be manipulated to instigate conflict”.¹⁴

The next chapter (Chapter 4) of this guide draws on GCED as a broad framework to propose several teaching and learning objectives relevant to the study of atrocity crimes.

b. Identifying entry points in national curricula

Direct curricular links

Teachers may find opportunities in official school curricula for teaching about atrocity crimes. For example, curricula in Namibia, Rwanda and South Africa present direct and explicit references to atrocity crimes.

- Namibia’s School History-syllabi¹⁵ cover local cases of atrocity cases, i.e. the Herero and Nama genocides as well as apartheid, both at junior (compulsory) and senior (non-compulsory) levels. At the senior level, local, regional (primarily apartheid in South Africa), and international (Nazi rule in Germany, and Stalin’s purges) cases are addressed and examined on a rolling basis.
- In Rwanda, genocide studies is a cross-cutting issue mainstreamed across several school subjects and taught sequentially across the six years of secondary education.¹⁶ The history syllabus, compulsory in the first three years of secondary education, explicitly stipulates the teaching of “the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi”. At upper secondary level, the syllabus requires a study of the “similarities and differences” between the Holocaust and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The syllabus pays special attention to the concept and key features of genocide, genocide denial and ideology, and prevention.
- In South African schools, social sciences is a compulsory subject. In the 9th grade, the social science curriculum includes a study of Nazi atrocity crimes, including the Holocaust.¹⁷ History is an optional subject at upper secondary level. The curriculum addresses “ideas of Race in the late 19th and 20th centuries” and the consequences “when pseudo-scientific ideas of Race became integral to government policies and legislation in the 19th and 20th centuries”. The curriculum requires the study of “Australia and the indigenous Australians” and “Nazi Germany and the holocaust (sic).” as two examples of atrocity crimes.¹⁸
- Both the social sciences and history curricula include the study of apartheid history as an internationally recognized crime against humanity.

13 United Nations General Assembly. 2011. Resolution 66/137. United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/467/04/PDF/N1146704.pdf?OpenElement>

14 Cole, E. (Ed.) 2007. *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation*. Rowman and Littlefield, p.2

15 National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), Syllabi, <http://www.nied.edu.na/documents/syllabuses/>

16 Rwanda Education Board, *Competence based curriculum*, https://reb.rw/fileadmin/competence_based_curriculum/index0.html

17 South Africa Department of Basic Education, *Social Sciences National Curriculum Statement*, <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/CD/National%20Curriculum%20Statements%20and%20Vocational/CAPS%20SP%20%20SOCIAL%20SCIENCE%20GR%207-9%20%20.pdf?ver=2015-01-27-160206-107>

18 South Africa Department of Basic Education, *History National Curriculum Statement*, <https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/CD/National%20Curriculum%20Statements%20and%20Vocational/CAPS%20FET%20%20HISTORY%20GR%2010-12%20%20WeB.pdf?ver=2015-01-27-154219-397>

Curricular entry points

Whether or not official curricula explicitly stipulate the study of atrocity crimes, teachers will find meaningful entry points through subject-specific content areas or in support of the overall aims and objectives of their curriculum. For instance:

- **School subjects.** History provides a natural fit for learning about atrocity crimes, including through subjects such as social sciences, citizenship or life skills/life orientation. Relatedly, subjects in the arts and humanities, such as languages, literature, geography, media literacy, music or STEM, may contain relevant thematic links, whether to media and information literacy (e.g. examining propaganda), learning about diverse peoples and cultures, or studying literature and memoirs about violent pasts.
- **Historical topics.** Several historical topics that tend to be covered in national curricula across Africa may open space to examine cases of atrocity crimes. These may include, but are certainly not limited to:
 - ▶ Africa's colonial history, specifically the themes relating to African responses and resistance to European colonization, can serve as a possible entry point for the study of the **Herero and Nama genocides**, that occurred in the German colony of "South-West Africa" (on the territory of today's Namibia).
 - ▶ The history of the Second World War, as well as of Fascism and Nazism in Europe, can serve as a possible entry point for the study of the Holocaust — the **genocide of the Jewish people — and other Nazi atrocity crimes**.
 - ▶ The legacy of colonial rule, post-independence history and related challenges, can serve as a possible entry point for the study of the **1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda**.
 - ▶ The Cold War can serve as a possible entry point for the study of the **Genocide in Cambodia by the communist Khmer Rouge regime**.
 - ▶ The history of **slavery and the transatlantic slave trade** can provide educational opportunities to deconstruct the discourses based on the concept of race that justified these systems of exploitation, and question the social, cultural and economic inequalities inherited from this tragedy.

The **General History of Africa** (GHA) is a useful resource in this context. It was launched by UNESCO in 1964 in support of the then newly independent African countries' willingness to take back ownership over the narration of their history and re-affirmation of their cultural identities. It covers the history of the entire African continent, from the appearance of mankind to the contemporary challenges facing Africans and their diasporas in the world, freeing it from racial prejudices ensuing from histories of slavery and colonization, and promoting an African perspective. Alongside drawing attention to atrocity crimes committed on the continent, the GHA deeply integrates the destiny of Africa into that of humanity by highlighting its relations with the other continents and the contribution of African cultures to the general progress of humanity.

- **Thematic entry points.** Teachers may also connect teaching about atrocity crimes to themes related to democracy, human rights, international cooperation and international organizations, and peace and conflict resolution. These themes are common in the values-based National Curriculum Frameworks and educational policies across the continent.

c. Identifying teachable moments

While teachers may find inroads for educating about atrocity crimes in the official curriculum, learners may also bring up related topics and questions according to their own curiosity and interests or in reaction to current events. Opportunities may arise in relation to:

- elections and political events
- conflicts between learners or within the community
- popular culture including films or artwork representing past or current violence
- commemorative sites and events

These and other opportunities may serve as *teachable moments* that teachers may recognize and seize to introduce or deepen a study of atrocity crimes.

Commemorative days and international days to counter discrimination

Commemorative days that address atrocity crimes bring history into public life. On such days, public attention is focused on remembering historic events. Some learners can be exposed to public narratives about the past through family and community discussion, in the news and on social media. On these occasions, teachers can provide important context to learners, using the approaches and lesson plans included in this guide to support deeper inquiry around commemorative events. Below are examples of International Days of Commemoration around which teachers could plan lessons or school activities with their students or wider school community ahead of the day. The same could be done with local commemorations.



Examples of International Days of Commemoration and days to counter prejudice and discrimination¹⁹

27 January	International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust
21 March	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
24 March	International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims
25 March	International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade
7 April	International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda
16 May	International Day of Living Together in Peace
18 June	International Day for Countering Hate Speech
18 July	Nelson Mandela International Day
31 August	International Day for People of African Descent
21 September	International Day of Peace
21 October	Africa Human Rights Day
9 December	International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime
10 December	Human Rights Day

¹⁹ United Nations, *International Days and Weeks*, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-days-and-weeks>

Chapter 4

Teaching objectives and learning outcomes

GCED supports a transformative pedagogy that provides a strong basis for education on atrocity crimes by holistically developing the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural domains of learning.



Cognitive

knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities



Socio-emotional

values, attitudes and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully



Behavioural

conduct, performance, practical application and engagement

Central to UNESCO's work, and promoted through the *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4*, GCED offers a "pedagogy that empowers students to examine critically their beliefs, values, and knowledge with the goal of developing a reflective knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of critical consciousness and agency".²⁰

GCED is not concerned with national citizenship but with shared responsibility within our collective planetary home. The concept of global citizenship provides teachers and educational institutions with a foundation for peace-building in the face of violent pasts.

Teaching objectives and learning outcomes that emerge from GCED are adaptable to a variety of educational contexts. The objectives and outcomes provide guidance to teachers for how to address atrocity crimes across the domains of learning. At the same time, these objectives and outcomes can be contextualized in relation to national policies and priorities, along with teachers' specific goals.

a. Teaching objectives

When teaching about atrocity crimes, teachers can aim to:

- ▶ Increase learners' knowledge and understanding of what constitutes atrocity crimes, as well as potential causes and consequences.
- ▶ Equip learners with the knowledge and skills to identify early warning signs of atrocity crimes.
- ▶ Equip learners with the knowledge and skills to critically analyze human behaviour and choices during atrocity crimes.
- ▶ Familiarize learners with the history of responses to atrocity crimes, internationally and on the African continent, in particular how international human rights norms to punish and prevent such crimes have evolved (i.e. Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948 Convention, Rome Statutes).
- ▶ Familiarize learners with local histories of atrocity crimes and equip them with the tools to engage in conversations about difficult pasts and their legacies, as well as take action to remediate these.
- ▶ Encourage learners to engage critically with historical narratives and sources of information and to examine critically how history is researched, written and remembered.
- ▶ Encourage learners' empathy and respect for diversity and equip them with the tools to act against the warning signs of oppression today. This includes reflecting on their responsibilities as citizens in their communities and beyond.

20 O. Ukpokodu. 2009. *The Practice of Transformative Pedagogy*. In *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 20, 2. p. 43.

b. Learning objectives

Based on a GCED framework, the following learning objectives may be envisaged when teaching about atrocity crimes:



COGNITIVE DOMAIN

Learners understand how and why atrocity crimes occurred in the context of regional and world history, including the roles of culture and identity, fear, prejudice, ideology and power, and appreciate how individuals and collectives resisted such crimes.

- ▶ Learners can articulate key concepts relating to atrocity crimes and are familiar with their legal definitions.
- ▶ Learners can identify the multiple causes of atrocity crimes, and the incremental nature of violence that can lead to atrocity crimes. Learners can also identify the long-term impact of atrocity crimes on individuals and societies.
- ▶ Learners can identify common patterns and processes that lead to genocide.²¹
- ▶ Learners can interrogate written, visual and audiovisual sources and unpack stereotypes, false assumptions and pseudoscience. They can identify and understand disinformation and propaganda, recognize the impact of disinformation and propaganda, extreme versions of nationalism and religious-based ideologies, and formulate responses to counter these.
- ▶ Learners can recognize the warning signs for the committing of atrocity crimes such as the consolidation of power, impunity for crimes, “us-them” rhetoric, or political instability.²²
- ▶ Learners can analyze the political decisions taken, and the roles of different institutions and individual members of society in shaping the processes that facilitate atrocity crimes.
- ▶ Learners can identify the factors and processes that may make some societies more resilient.
- ▶ Learners can analyze varying local narratives related to atrocity crimes. They can identify patterns of human rights violations in their respective contexts and can question and confront these.
- ▶ Learners can contextualize atrocity crimes and can analyze how temporal and geographical specificities influenced the unfolding of events.
- ▶ Learners are sensitized to regional specificities, such as the legacy of colonialism that may also apply to violent experiences in other countries on the African continent and in other regions.
- ▶ Learners can analyse and question the application and efficacy of international human rights norms and mechanisms developed to prevent and respond to such crimes.
- ▶ Learners can apply knowledge from historical cases of atrocity crime to make informed and meaningful connections to past and contemporary issues at local, regional and international levels.

21 United Nations. 2014. *Framework of analysis for atrocity crimes: a tool for prevention*, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Genocide-Framework-of-Analysis-English.pdf>

22 United Nations. 2014. *Framework of analysis for atrocity crimes: a tool for prevention*, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Genocide-Framework-of-Analysis-English.pdf>



SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DOMAIN

Learners challenge and complicate their own assumptions about human behaviour, social responsibility and decision-making. They appreciate the importance of personal responsibility and how proactive conduct can make a difference.

- ▶ Learners strengthen their empathy and perspective-taking by gaining insights into individuals' experiences before, during and after atrocity crimes.
- ▶ Learners better understand how societies deal with a past of atrocity crimes, how affected communities and survivors live with the legacy, how nations devastated by such crimes may be able to overcome conflict and achieve peace and stability, and what the obstacles are that can impede this, including distortion or denial of the atrocity crime or crimes committed.
- ▶ Learners are able to recognize contemporary forms of discrimination and injustice and can identify appropriate measures to counter these.
- ▶ Learners' resilience to violent extremist ideologies is strengthened.
- ▶ Learners can reflect on and challenge their own biases and prejudices, are respectful of differences and are able to build respectful relations across differences.
- ▶ Learners can reflect critically on their identities and on broader identification processes; they are able to recognize and analyze some of the mechanisms and effects of labelling individuals and groups and reject exclusionary and stereotyping rhetoric.
- ▶ Learners analyze the social and political conditions under which atrocity crimes have occurred, the processes of the escalation and de-escalation of violence, and how extremist ideologies identify atrocity crimes and genocide as a strategic political choice.



BEHAVIOURAL DOMAIN

Learners monitor the emergence of prejudice, political oppression and discrimination, hate speech and other social, economic and political factors that can lead to systematic mass violence, and respond. Learners engage in so-called "pro-social" behaviours – actions that benefit others and support their well-being and sense of belonging to a community. Learners think critically about the ways they can act effectively and responsibly at a local, national and global level to contribute to a more peaceful world. Learners develop the motivation and willingness to take necessary actions.

- ▶ Learners actively engage to make (school) communities more inclusive, embrace diversity and are respectful of human rights.
- ▶ Learners are engaged in commemoration and conflict transformation processes in their communities, and express actions of solidarity with victims and survivors of atrocity crimes.
- ▶ Learners view themselves in the context of their country's past, present and future, are aware of their responsibilities as citizens, and are motivated to take action to enhance peaceful coexistence, within their communities and internationally.
- ▶ Learners engage with and react to political and social developments within their country or community that may lead to violence in their communities.

Chapter 5

Teaching principles

Whether a teacher has experience teaching about atrocity crimes or is new to the topic, these teaching principles offer key considerations for helping to have sensitive and meaningful engagement with learners about atrocity crimes.

There are four teaching principles:

- 1. Reflect and prepare** before teaching
- 2. Set up** the classroom space to be a safe and engaging environment
- 3. Connect** learner experiences to wider social, political and international dynamics
- 4. Historicize and humanize** a study of atrocity crimes

Each principle is accompanied by strategies and/or connections to the suggested activities in the annex.

Teaching principle 1

Reflect and prepare before teaching

Reflect

Teaching about atrocity crimes can challenge the teacher's personal beliefs and how they make sense of the world. It is critical that teachers are aware of their personal views, emotions and biases in relation to these histories. Teachers are not neutral participants in their classrooms. Before beginning to teach the topic, it is important for teachers to consider how their identity, background and experiences may influence how they teach, how the teacher expects learners to respond, and how combined, this may influence how learners experience the lesson.

Strategy

Drafting brief personal biographies can be a useful self-reflection exercise for teachers. It may be helpful for teachers to have ongoing dialogue with trusted colleagues about their understanding and response to the histories they are teaching, as such dialogue may help them to identify bias, and provide support. Teachers should seek advice from colleagues, mentors or trainers should they feel unsure or insecure about teaching a particular topic.

Prepare: Understand the content thoroughly

It is crucial that teachers have accurate historical knowledge. It is essential that teachers use reliable sources of information to prepare their lessons. This holds true whether the lessons are taking place in a history, social science, literature or guidance class. Teachers will need to read widely and understand the chronology, causes and consequences of these events. The annex contains a comprehensive list of websites and readings that can help teachers to better understand histories of atrocity crimes.

Strategy

A helpful practice is to learn alongside colleagues who will be teaching the same history. Teachers can share resources and materials and develop support networks to discuss questions and issues that may emerge. Peer-teaching is another helpful option – for example, teachers might consider mastering particular sections of the history, which they could then teach their colleagues.

Teaching principle 2: Set up the classroom space to be a safe and engaging environment

Create a safe environment in which to learn

Learning about the history of atrocity crimes may provoke strong emotional reactions. Learners may respond with disbelief, shock, sadness, guilt, anger, or fear. They may feel sympathy for the victims of this history and express an eagerness to change the world. They may also “switch off” or appear apathetic and unconcerned. These differences of emotional response may be based on their identities, along with personal or family memories of violence, trauma and loss. Teachers can support learners by creating a safe space where learners can express their feelings as they confront the complex issues surrounding atrocity crimes and learn how to process and understand these feelings. Through engaging in these difficult conversations and being able to express and acknowledge their emotions, learners can develop critical thinking skills, empathy and a sense of civic agency and responsibility.

Strategies

Teachers can create a safe classroom space through providing opportunities for learners to respond. For example, the teacher can allow a few seconds of silent writing for learners to process what they've heard, read or seen. The teacher can invite learners to share, if they wish, how they felt.

Teachers need to feel supported when they begin teaching about atrocity crimes, so that they, in turn, can create a safe space in which to learn. Teaching about atrocity crimes can trigger painful emotions for the teacher. It is very useful for the teacher to establish or join support systems where they can express their distress. This will allow teachers a space to express their feelings, which may allow them to support better their learners' engagement with the history. Teacher support systems can also be used as forums to discuss and develop lessons and teaching materials cooperatively and create channels to receive feedback and assistance. Support systems can take the form of school-based support groups or community and online networks.

Create an engaging environment in which to learn: participatory, learner-centred and inclusive pedagogies

Using participatory, learner-centred and inclusive pedagogies are essential in teaching about atrocity crimes. The stories they will encounter can be painful to read, listen to or watch. It is important to create time in the lessons for learners to think quietly, to reflect on how they are feeling in writing and in conversation, and, together as a class, process what they are learning. For learning to occur, teaching methods need to be sensitive to the social and emotional as well as the intellectual needs of the learners. By encouraging curiosity and engagement, emotional experiences or stimuli have been shown to be remembered more vividly and accurately, with greater resilience over time.²³ If the emotional intensity of a lesson is too high – for example, if learning prompts such as images of violence produce too heightened emotional reactions – it may inhibit the learner's ability to retain information, or develop understanding of ideas or concepts.²⁴

23 C.M. Tyng, H.U. Amin, M.N.M Saad and A.S Malik. 2017. *The Influences of Emotion on Learning and Memory*. In *Frontier Psychology*. 8, 1454.

24 UNESCO International Bureau of Education. 2022. *Thematic note No 8: on the topic of knowledge and emotions*. Curriculum on the Move, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382104?posInSet=30&queryId=800c4341-9db8-45a3-b306-68bb48d8b6a9>

Teaching principle 3

Connect learner experiences to wider social, political and international dynamics

Facilitate connections between history and relevant contemporary issues, and allow learners to explore ways to take informed action today

Exploring histories of atrocity crimes can prompt learners' reflection on contemporary issues and a desire to respond to them. By introducing carefully selected historical examples, teachers can indeed support their learners to engage critically with such issues, and consider, in informed ways, individual or collective action. Crucially, while connecting historical issues to current contexts should be encouraged, teachers should avoid inaccurate analogies that misrepresent or trivialize past atrocity crimes.

Strategy

Teachers can identify relevant historical case studies to illuminate the local context. For example, connections can be made between how hate speech, propaganda and disinformation fuelled the Holocaust or the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and contemporary examples of hate speech and disinformation and the dangers they pose. It is important to highlight the similarities and the differences between different historical contexts so that learners can understand better the specificities of the past and the present, and do not make ahistorical or inappropriate analogies.

Incorporate local and/or regional perspectives

By including case studies of atrocity crimes that took place in Africa, teachers can foster a strong sense of connection and purpose among learners, as they explore links to their local realities. Learners may investigate regional specificities, such as the legacy of colonialism. Eventually, local learning can promote greater empowerment and positive societal change on the continent.

Teachers can consider teaching a case study of atrocity crimes that is closer geographically to the context of the learners. Learners may have a particular interest in examining historical and contemporary atrocity crimes that took place closer to their home contexts. Examples include:

- genocides against the Herero and Nama from 1904-08 in the former German South West Africa, today's Namibia
- apartheid in South Africa in 1948-1994
- the "Gukurahundi" atrocities, which resulted in the killing of around 20,000 Ndebele speakers in Zimbabwe in the 1980s
- the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda
- post-election violence in Kenya in 2007-2008
- conflict and inter-communal violence in South Sudan post-independence

Widen the scope of the study of atrocity crimes beyond the immediate context

Studying atrocity crimes in other contexts can be useful, particularly when local case studies hit too close to home, or when politics limit what can be discussed in the classroom. Introducing the topic of atrocity crimes through an historical case from another region can make it less threatening for learners to examine their local history.²⁵ Such an approach can help learners develop a greater global perspective.

²⁵ UNESCO.2017. *Education about the Holocaust and preventing genocide: a policy guide*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248071>

The cases from other geographical locations should be selected and taught with care, with attention given to their particular historical and cultural contexts, before introducing the local situation. Learners need to understand that even when there are certain similar features that stand as warning signs that a society is vulnerable to atrocity crimes, every event is unique in some way, because of its particular context. The differences between historical events are as important and significant as their similarities and care must be taken not to equate, diminish, or trivialize histories through uncontextualized comparisons.

Strategy

Teachers should avoid generalizations that suggest one historical experience is worse than another or identical. Learners should be taught through timelines and maps, what “context” means. Learners need to understand the political and legal characterization of the specific case study of atrocity being studied, which may be different in nature, objectives and scope to another. It is possible and legitimate to compare historical events. However, teachers need to be alert to comparing the suffering of victims or victim groups. Such comparisons are meaningless and not a legitimate intellectual or educational endeavour. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance guidance on Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust recommends that teachers “be prepared to examine other histories of genocide, racism, enslavement, persecution, or colonialism in the modern world. Take care to clearly distinguish between different cases including the causes and nature of each.”²⁶

Teaching principle 4: Historicize and humanize a study of atrocity crimes

Historicize: Contextualize atrocity crimes, teach about the processes leading up to them, and emphasise that atrocity crimes are not inevitable

The decisions taken by individuals, especially those in positions of political power, and the role played by government and social institutions, provide context that is crucial for understanding why and how atrocity crimes take place. Critically, by examining the steps that lead to these events, learners can recognize that such atrocities are not inevitable but instead could be prevented through attention to early warning signs.

Strategy

Teachers can support learners’ study of the history of an atrocity crime by encouraging them to investigate the factors that shaped decisions and behaviour. Using a timeline, learners can see how the events unfolded, and how the context shaped what happened. Teachers can ask learners to consider the actions taken by individuals, groups and governments that led to the atrocity crimes being committed, the early warning signs that would be useful in considering the current or future contexts, and when the atrocity crime might have been prevented or stopped.

²⁶ International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. 2019. *Recommendations for teaching and learning about the Holocaust*, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/IHRA-Recommendations-Teaching-and-Learning-about-Holocaust.pdf>

Humanize a study of atrocity crimes: explore the range of human behaviour and choice

The history of atrocity crimes can provide useful opportunities for learners to examine the complexity of individual decision-making within a particular context, where broader social, cultural, and political factors may determine whether an individual acts as perpetrator, bystander or rescuer. To promote civic agency and responsibility in young people, teachers can encourage learners to examine the choices individuals made, considering the positions they held in the society, and what shaped these choices at that particular time, in that particular place.

Strategy

Testimony and stories from those involved offer opportunities for learners to explore the range of human behaviour and choices. By including a range of testimonies, teachers can help learners to learn more about the impact of the history on people's lives, how people responded and tried to anticipate, and what could be done to prevent future crimes.

Humanize a study of atrocity crimes: foreground stories about people

Behind numbers and statistics are individual people who made choices and were impacted by the choices of others. By sharing testimonies of those who witnessed atrocity crimes, teachers can remind learners of the humanity of those involved, and the multiple perspectives of those who were affected. Such teaching methods help learners to appreciate the value of interpreting these histories through both statistics and experiential accounts. Such teaching methods provide learners with a human dimension to a history that may otherwise be unimaginable. Teaching with testimonies makes it possible for learners to connect to the history on a more personal and emotional level. Teaching with testimonies also provides the opportunity to introduce multiple perspectives into lessons about atrocity crimes.

Strategy

When including first-person accounts and testimonies, whether through written, video or audio sources, it is vital to provide the context for the testimony. The testimony cannot tell us everything we want to know about the history. The usefulness and value of testimony is that it gives us an insight into what one person experienced and how the history impacted the individual.

Humanize a study of atrocity crimes: Foreground complexity and ensure sensitivity

Addressing atrocity crimes in the classroom is a careful exercise for teachers, requiring a high degree of sensitivity and attention to complexity. Exposing students to depictions of violence, for instance, may inhibit their understanding, especially if the students are highly impacted by the source. Role-play or simulation activities that ask learners to imagine themselves in the shoes of victims or perpetrators may denigrate or dehumanize the victims and encourage simplistic rather than critical thinking. Teachers should avoid desensitising or traumatising over-exposure to violence, and discourage generalizations that reinforce negative stereotypes or reduce historical understanding to a simple division into “good” and “bad.”

Strategy

Teachers can draw on pedagogies that support learners to evaluate evidence, while promoting awareness of bias, openness to alternative views, critique of generalizations, and encourage the examination of the complexity of situations. Sometimes, this might involve helping learners feel comfortable with ambiguity and contradiction by asking questions rather than providing solutions.

Chapter 6

Taking learning beyond the classroom

Ideally, education about atrocity crimes should not stop in the classroom. Teachers can seize opportunities to broaden the scope and the reach of a study of atrocity crimes through a whole-school, community-oriented, or lifelong learning approach that enables greater context and impact.

By collaborating with other teachers and with administrators, teachers may foster a whole-school approach to atrocity crimes that engages the entire school community rather than leading a stand-alone lesson or series of lessons in an individual class. Such an approach would allow the creation of a school-wide conversation and an environment where everyone has the opportunity to learn about atrocity crimes and the measures required to prevent them.

In exploring possibilities for a whole-school approach to atrocity crimes, education, support and the cooperation of school management and the school community is important. Teachers may work to establish a representative and inclusive advisory committee within the school community. This committee could be tasked with identifying opportunities for further integrating and embedding education about atrocity crimes into the school values, ethos and routine, and into planning and organizing related consultations and school activities. Such activities may include regular school-wide commemorations, awareness and prevention campaigns, group projects, exhibitions, artistic performances, and inter-school projects.

A community-oriented approach involves the wider community through dialogue and exchange and addresses the fact that the factors that facilitate atrocity crimes are found in the broader social world, just as the impact of the atrocity crimes is experienced outside the school as well. Indeed, education about the history of atrocity crimes often emerges from initiatives from civil society. In particular, victims' groups and their representative institutions have worked to ensure better recognition and knowledge within mainstream society about crimes perpetrated in the past. Community members and organizations, including families, elders, museums and civil society groups, are important partners whose cooperation should be valued and nurtured.

Depending on the context, non-formal educational organizations can often effectively supplement the work of schools through a variety of programmes, such as direct interventions in classrooms, teacher training, or the production of teaching and learning materials. Schools and teachers can organize visits to museums or community organizations or invite speakers to address a school group. Community groups can be invited to participate in remembrance activities that honour the memory of the victims and survivors of atrocity crimes.

The wider community can be consulted when designing a curriculum relating to a local history of violence to ensure that it meets the needs of the community.

Academic and research partnerships can also enrich classroom learning. Schools and teachers can foster and sustain close collaborations with researchers and archivists when developing learning materials about atrocity crimes and histories of violence. Many university and archive outreach departments can provide access to historical information and recent research and support the evaluation of sources and evidence.

Recognizing the expertise required to address complex issues, teachers may also want to establish communities of practice within their school and across different departments (for instance in view of implementing cross-curricular approaches). Through the organization of regular meetings and exchanges, a community of practice could serve as a useful platform for peer support and collaboration, and the sharing of knowledge, experiences, ideas and good practices among teachers involved or willing to be involved in furthering atrocity crimes education. The community of practice can:

- connect teachers who might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact, either as frequently or at all to discuss what and how to teach about histories of atrocity crimes;
- provide a shared context for teachers to communicate and share information and personal experiences in a way that builds understanding and insight on the teaching of atrocity crimes;
- help teachers improve their practice by providing a forum to identify, collect and evaluate best practices;
- encourage collaborative processes for the planning and delivery of lessons.

Schools, teacher training institutions, and other educational organizations can sponsor communities of practice groups. Individual teachers can design a community environment, foster the formalization of the community, and plan activities to help grow and sustain the community. Organizers can use surveys and informal discussions to determine where and how often to meet and provide a tentative schedule of meetings.



Annex

Teaching about atrocity: lesson activities and pedagogies

This section proposes adaptable teaching strategies based on some of the learning outcomes stated earlier.²⁴ Each of the activities will fit within one lesson of 40-50 minutes or within a double lesson but can be extended or adapted according to the learning context and teachers' capacity.

To support learning to build deeper understanding of atrocity crimes, the activities have been organized purposefully according to a logical flow, with a concluding section on classroom discussions that can support learning throughout the unit:



Create a classroom agreement
for a safe and engaging learning environment



Understand the role of identity
and instrumentalization thereof in atrocity crimes



Examine history
through testimony and written and visual sources



Facilitate classroom discussions

²⁴ The teaching strategies in this chapter have been informed by and adapted from Facing History and Ourselves – a global teacher development organization that uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and their learners to stand up to bigotry and hate. Learn more about Facing History and Ourselves: <https://www.facinghistory.org/>



Create a classroom agreement for a safe and engaging learning environment

To create the foundations for a safe and engaging learning environment, learners can collaboratively create an agreement about the values and principles they would like to uphold as a learning community.

Classroom agreements can include several clearly defined rules or expectations, as well as consequences for those who do not fulfil their obligations as members of the classroom community. The agreement should ensure that all members of the classroom strive to uphold the dignity of all, keep dialogue respectful, and encourage the equal and positive engagement of all.

The final classroom agreement should ideally be placed in a visible location, so that teachers can return to it before lessons that might provoke an emotional response or differing views. Teachers might also return to the classroom agreement when learners are demonstrating the positive behaviours or values drawn up in the agreement.



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Creating a classroom agreement

Material
pen and paper
School level
all ages

A. INVITE LEARNERS TO CREATE A CLASSROOM AGREEMENT

The teacher explains to the learners that the class will be creating an agreement for how the class will learn together. This will include behaviours and values that everyone agrees to uphold in the classroom.

The teacher discusses with the class which of the identified behaviours, values and attitudes should be included in the classroom agreement.

The teacher gives learners the opportunity to suggest additional behaviours, values and attitudes. The teacher can also make suggestions if they feel there are some missing.

B. TURN THE BEHAVIOURS, VALUES AND ATTITUDES INTO ACTION STATEMENTS THAT THE TEACHER CAPTURES ON THE BOARD OR ON A SHEET OF PAPER FOR THE CLASS TO SEE

Begin each statement with *In this classroom...*

Some examples of action statements that have been included in classroom agreements are:

- ▶ In this classroom we will listen with respect. We will try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.
- ▶ In this classroom we will make comments using “I” statements.
- ▶ In this classroom we will say “thank you” if someone has an idea or question that helps our own learning.
- ▶ In this classroom if someone says something that hurts or offends us, we won’t attack that person. We will acknowledge that the comment—not the person—hurt our feelings and explain why.
- ▶ In this classroom insults are never acceptable.
- ▶ In this classroom if we don’t understand something, we ask a question.
- ▶ In this classroom we share the talking time and allow others to speak as well.
- ▶ In this classroom we do not interrupt others while they are speaking.

C. ADHERING TO THE AGREEMENT

After the class has completed its agreement, it is important that each learner shows their support for it. Learners can copy the contract into their notebooks and sign the page. Alternatively, teachers can ask all learners to sign a copy of the agreement that remains displayed in the classroom.

Maintaining opening and closing routines

Material
pen and paper
School level
all ages

Routines that promote desirable behaviours and values at the start and end of each lesson can promote a safe and nurturing learning environment.

Opening routines set a welcoming and inclusive tone. They are short and can be implemented in small groups or as a full class before moving on to the main learning activities for the day. The important thing is to regularly engage in reflection, build relationships and transition thoughtfully into the day's academic activities.

Closing routines can re-establish connection, summarize key concepts, encourage reflection on emotions, and set academic and personal goals. They can take place via whole-class discussion, small groups and individual reflections.

Below are two examples of opening and closing routines.

1.2.1 AN OPENING ROUTINE - FIVE FINGERS

School level: all ages

This routine helps learners assess and communicate how they are feeling. Teachers can use this routine to check in on learners' emotional well-being and comfort level with the material.

At the start of the lesson, the teacher poses a question. Learners respond by holding up 1–5 fingers. One finger indicates the low end of the scale and five represents the high end. The exercise can also be used to assess learning and understanding. For examples, the teacher uses the responses of the learners to start small group discussions or a class discussion, with the aim to move everyone closer to the high end of the scale. Possible questions include:

- ▶ Five fingers, how are you feeling today?
- ▶ Five fingers, how did you feel after yesterday's lesson?
- ▶ Five fingers, how ready are you to start our first activity?
- ▶ Five fingers, how well do you understand the instructions for the next activity?

1.2.2 A CLOSING ROUTINE - APPRECIATION, APOLOGY OR INSIGHT MOMENTS

School level: all ages

This routine helps learners nurture their classroom community by sharing appreciation for their peers, apologies when they may have hurt others' feelings, and insight moments where they experienced an understanding of themselves, the class, or society.

The teacher gives learners a minute to reflect on the day's lesson.

- ▶ The teacher asks learners to prepare to share an appreciation, an apology, or an insight moment. The teacher models what is expected by sharing their reflection first with the learners.
- ▶ The teacher goes around the room asking each learner to share one of the three things they wrote down.



Understanding the construction of identity

Identity is shaped by many factors including the social, cultural, economic, political and historical context, political and ideological climate, family dynamics, and individual characteristics. A person's identity relates to their concept of themselves.

The development of a sense of self is important in guiding individuals' thoughts, actions, and interactions with others, and ultimately in shaping peaceful relations with others.

The multiple dimensions of identity are stratified and hold different priorities, nuances and powers in different contexts, and can change over time as well.

Education has a critical role in creating spaces for young people to strengthen their sense of who they are, who they want to be and their interconnectedness with others. Understanding identity is valuable for learners' own social, moral, and intellectual development. It also serves as a foundation for understanding why atrocity crimes occur and how they affect individuals and whole societies.

Teachers and schools can help learners to reflect on their identities, for example, by creating spaces for learners to reflect about inequalities and privileges, by guiding learners to understand and become critically conscious of the structures that segregate and discriminate and by affirming the dignity of everyone. Learners can better understand others' personal and cultural identities by interacting with others, including through intercultural dialogues and activities that take place in cooperation with community organizations and museums, unlearning prejudices and learning to appreciate and value differences.

By reflecting on their identities, learners are given the opportunity to connect to history on a more personal level by considering their own relationship with the past, present and future. Further, by understanding how identities can inform behaviour, learners may better understand the choices made by individuals in the past and today. It may also help learners better understand how identity constructs have been manipulated and utilized to fuel atrocity crimes.

Undoubtedly, issues around identity may be among the most sensitive and controversial. Discussions around identity can potentially polarize the classroom. It is therefore important that teachers introduce such discussions sensitively.



Creating a classroom agreement

Material
pen and paper
School level
all ages

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

→ Learners can reflect on their own identities and on broader identification processes and their possible consequences; they are able to identify and analyse some of the mechanisms and effects of labelling individuals and groups, and the dangers of exclusionary and stereotyping rhetoric.

A. INVITE LEARNERS TO CREATE IDENTITY CHARTS

The teacher explains to the learners that they will be creating identity charts that will show the various aspects of who they are.

Note: Should the teacher wish the learners to share their identity charts with others, learners should be encouraged to share only those things that they feel comfortable sharing.

To run the activity without paper/pens, either (a) use small group sharing-circles or (b) encourage learners to bring items from their surrounding environment that help explain and share aspects of their identities.

B. HOW DO I SEE MYSELF AND HOW DO I THINK OTHERS SEE ME?

The teacher gives learners a few minutes to create their charts, answering the question “Who am I?” The charts can include:

- ▶ their role in a family (e.g. daughter, sister, mother)
- ▶ their hobbies and interests (e.g. musician, sports fan)
- ▶ their background (e.g. religion, race, nationality, ethnicity, hometown, place of birth)
- ▶ their physical characteristics and appearance
- ▶ their strengths and skills
- ▶ their personality
- ▶ their dreams and aspirations

The teacher gives learners a few minutes to create another identity chart. This time it needs to answer the question “How do I think people see me?”

C. COMPARE CHARTS

The teacher asks learners to share where different parts of their identity came from with their partner. Learners should be encouraged to ask one another questions about their identity charts but not to challenge or debate anything. This activity is about increasing understanding and not about agreeing or disagreeing with parts of others’ identity.

The teacher can guide the activity with the following questions:

- ▶ Are there things that are similar?
- ▶ Are there things that are different from the way you see yourself?
- ▶ What are the roots of each aspect of your identity (i.e. My hobbies come from... /My religion/beliefs/values beliefs come from... etc.)?
- ▶ Do you ever find yourself trying to change yourself in any way to meet the expectations that you think others have of you?

Learners should be reminded that they will not have to share anything they do not feel comfortable sharing.

D. REFLECT ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

The teacher asks learners to reflect on their own identity in a journal by selecting from the following questions:

1. Whose opinions and beliefs have the greatest effect on your own identity?
2. What dilemmas arise when others view you differently than you view yourself?
3. Are there aspects of your identity you keep private in order to be, or feel, accepted?
4. Are there elements of your identity that change depending on where you are, or who you are with? Do any parts of your identity always remain the same and unchanged?
5. How do you respond to the assumptions people make about you because of your identity? To what extent do you accept or reject those assumptions?
6. Which parts of your identity feel the most important to you at the moment? Do you think that will change in the future? Why?
7. Do you think your identity is something that you are born with or that is created once you are born?



Introducing historical content

Developing an accurate knowledge base provides learners with a foundation from which to engage with historical sources and interpretation. It is critical that teachers prepare well in advance and conduct additional research using reliable sources of information should local textbooks not include detailed historical information on the atrocity crimes to be examined.

There are many ways for teachers to engage learners with the complex histories of atrocity crimes, and this section proposes some possible ways forward. Teachers are invited to work with the historical overviews included in the annex of this guide, which provide useful foundational knowledge.

The example below draws on the case study of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda to demonstrate the possibility of using these overviews as starting points for learners to gain foundational historical knowledge.



Richard Juilliant/Shutterstock.com

Expanding timelines

Material
copies of handout;
pen and sheets of A4/5 paper
or cards

School level
secondary

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Learners can contextualize atrocity crimes and can analyze how temporal and geographical specificities influenced the unfolding of events.
- Learners can identify the multiple causes and the long-term consequences of atrocity crimes on individuals and societies.
- Learners are aware of the incremental nature of violence that can lead to genocide.

A. DISTRIBUTE THE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE 1994 GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSI IN RWANDA

Depending on the resources available, each learner could receive a copy of the Historical Overview, they could share copies in pairs, or the teacher can make a summary note of the overview on the board and read the full overview to the class.

B. FOCUSED SHARED READING

- ▶ The teacher asks learners to work in pairs to conduct more focused shared reading. Learners can work through the reading one paragraph at a time and write down any dates that are mentioned. Next to each date they need to answer:
 - ▶ What happened on this date/during this period?
 - ▶ What was the effect or consequence of what happened?

Note: If the class does not have printed copies of the reading to work with, the teacher can read each paragraph aloud and ask learners to write down the dates and what happened then as they are listening. After finishing each paragraph, the learners work for a few minutes with someone else in the class to complete the answers to the two questions above.

C. CREATING THE TIMELINE

When the learners have worked through each paragraph, the teacher works with them to create a timeline together. Ideally, components of this timeline are written on sheets of paper or cards. This will allow the teacher to display cards along the timeline, adding and adapting as the lessons continue and the learners understand more of the history.

Ideally, the teacher will use three sheets of A4/5 paper or card for each date that the class identifies. Alternatively, the teacher can use the board to capture the dates, what happened and its consequences.

The teacher asks a pair of learners to share the first date that they found important in the reading. The teacher writes the date on a sheet of paper (or on the board) and places it on the board or a classroom wall.

Another pair explains what happened on that date. When the teacher and the class have agreed that the answer is correct, the teacher captures this on another sheet of paper or card and places it below the date.

The teacher asks a different pair of learners to share what they think the effects or consequences were. There may be a few answers. When the teacher and the class have agreed that those answers are correct, the teacher captures these on another sheet of paper or card and places it below the second sheet of paper or card.

At the end of the process, there will be some important dates, explanations and consequences on the board or classroom wall. This enables the learners to visually conceptualize the events chronologically over a period of time and helps learners to see how events may be linked through cause and consequence.

The teacher reminds learners that this is an expanding timeline. As they learn more in the lessons that follow, more dates, explanations and consequences can be added to the timeline.

3.2 Using testimony in the classroom

Survivor and witness testimonies — first-hand accounts from individuals who experienced atrocity crimes — have the potential to help learners appreciate and empathize with the human dimensions of these histories while also nurturing critical and analytical thinking skills. They also invoke learners as witnesses, accountable to respond in ways that protect the rights of all.

Testimonies add to what we learn from historians and secondary sources. By linking first-hand accounts with a variety of secondary sources, such as those referred to in the next section, “Teaching with written and visual sources”, learners can make sense of individual experiences and perspectives within a broader context.

Note: While there are great opportunities in using testimonies in the classroom, learners may become distressed when encountering testimonies that involve violence or discrimination. Teachers are encouraged to engage sensitively with testimonies of memory and trauma.

Below is an example practice of using written testimony in the classroom. While it specifically uses the testimony of a survivor of crimes against humanity in Cambodia, the same approach can be adopted for testimonies of different cases of atrocity crime.



Using written testimony in the classroom

Material
copies of handout;
pen and sheets of A4/5
paper or cards

School level
secondary

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Learners' empathy and perspective-taking are strengthened by gaining insights into individuals' experiences before, during and after atrocity crimes.
- Learners better understand how societies deal with a past of mass violence, how affected communities and survivors live with the legacy of genocide, and how nations devastated by such crimes may be able to overcome conflict and achieve peace and stability.

A. REFLECTING BEFORE READING

Encountering a testimony can be a powerful space for learning, whether it is expressed in writing, over video, or through an audio recording. It is important that teachers prepare learners for the stories they will hear or read, especially since many are traumatic.

To prepare for encountering testimonies, the teacher reads the following quote from Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Elie Wiesel to the class. Wiesel talks about the experience of hearing survivor testimony.

"The idea of telling these stories is to sensitize people — that you should become more sensitive — to yourselves, to your friends, even to strangers...become sensitive; not only to the story of what we try to tell, but about what happens even today — because what happens even today is always related to what happened then."²⁵

The teacher asks learners to answer the following questions in pairs:

- ▶ What message is Wiesel trying to share?
- ▶ What does it mean to "become sensitive"?
- ▶ How can we become sensitive to the stories of others?
- ▶ What do we need to think about when connecting the stories of the past to today?

B. READING THE TESTIMONY

Depending on the resources available, each learner could receive a copy of the testimony of *Siv Sokh Kea*, a survivor of the genocide committed in Cambodia. Learners could share copies in pairs or small groups or the teacher can read the testimony to the class.

The teacher asks learners to divide a piece of paper into three columns; alternatively, the teacher could draw lines down the board.

- ▶ Label the left column, "What am I learning?", and record information presented in the testimony.
- ▶ Label the middle column, "How am I reflecting?", and record reactions to this information: a comment, a feeling, or a connection to something learners know about or have experienced. Why do you think this testimony is important? If this event occurred today, what would be different? What can you learn from examining this?
- ▶ Label the third question, "What questions do I have?", and ask learners to write down what the testimony leaves them wondering about: who? what? when? where? why? how?

The teacher asks learners to complete their tables during the reading (and/or when they have finished) or think about their responses if the teacher is using the class board.

Learners could read the testimony to each other in small groups, read alone, or listen to the teacher read aloud.

25 Facing History and Ourselves, *Teaching with Video Testimony*, <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-video-testimony>

C. AFTER READING

The teacher gives the learners some time to think about their responses and either add to their individual tables or contribute to the class table on the board.

The teacher invites the learners to share with one or two people sitting next to or near them. Learners need only share what they feel comfortable sharing. Some learners may not feel comfortable sharing their emotional reactions to the testimony.

The teacher invites a few learners to then share with the rest of the class. The teacher can guide the discussion with the following points:

- ▶ What do we learn from this person's testimony?
- ▶ What does this testimony tell us about him/her as a person?
- ▶ What can we learn about the genocide through reading her/his testimony?
- ▶ What makes it difficult to read or listen to this testimony?
- ▶ Is there anything that he/she mentions that we can add to our expanding timeline?
- ▶ Does the testimony raise any questions? What further learning do we need to do to better understand the testimony?

Adaptation: Using video testimony in the classroom

Video testimonies provide additional opportunities to learn from witnesses and survivors of atrocities. There are many filmed recordings of survivor and witness testimonies from the Holocaust, the genocide in Cambodia and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. These are widely available and links to websites have been included at the end of this guide.

The approach outlined in the activity above can also be used for watching testimony. Here as well, it is important to encourage your learners to capture both their learning and their reactions.

Note: When watching testimony, it is particularly important that learners be encouraged to both watch and listen. The testimonies include words and images. The learners need to watch the speaker's body language and notice the patterns of speech. When do they pause? Where do they look? How do those gestures relate to the stories they are telling?



A testimony from the crimes against humanity committed by the Khmer Rouge Regime in Cambodia

Siv Sokh Kea was a taxicab owner before the atrocity crimes

My wife and I are Cambodian Chinese, but we cannot speak Chinese. We did not meet until our wedding day, even though we are great cousins. Our parents arranged our marriage, and as their son, I did not dare say no to them. Our wedding ceremony was celebrated based on both Chinese and Khmer customs. My parents were conservative, so we had to wear traditional clothing. I only wore a single suit, but my wife wore two dresses; one was red and pink. After the Khmer Rouge regime, my older sister told me that she exchanged our wedding clothes for rice. She thanked me, saying she would have starved to death without them.

My wife carried a handkerchief to hold money; Cambodian women at that time did not carry purses often. She sewed it herself; she liked sewing and embroidering. She would sew many kinds of flowers on her clothing and embroider pillowcases. We loved each other very much. After our wedding, we had an above-average standard of living. She stayed home and looked after the children, while I sold sugar palm in the market. In one year, I sold hundreds of jars of sugar palm and earned a large sum of money.

We moved often. We first lived in my in-laws' house in Kampong Speu Province and then in Phnom Penh. Eventually, I saved enough money to buy a car and ran a taxi from Phnom Penh to Battambang Province. I was driving my taxi in the early 1970s; Lon Nol soldiers often drove in front of the cars then to guard our safety because the Khmer Rouge soldiers would ambush us along the road. As the situation became worse, I decided to abandon my taxi route and buy a new mini-car instead. I ran it as a taxi inside Phnom Penh.

One night, my cousin was lighting a kerosene lamp and set his house on fire. There was a strong wind, which caused the fire to spread. It killed my brother's child and destroyed 17 houses, including mine. All I had left was my mini-car and the money in my pocket. I took the money I had left and bought shoes with it because I had run out of the house in my bare feet. Lon Nol soldiers detained us in the security office for a while after that; they suspected that my family had set the fire. The newspapers wrote about the event, saying "Lao Sokh Kea, a Chinese, caused a fire in order to give the enemy a chance to come into the country."

On the liberation day in 1975, many bombs were dropped near my house. People could not travel anywhere, so I also stopped running the taxi. I took my wedding clothes to my cousin's house in Phnom Penh for safekeeping, just before my family was evacuated. I hired a boat to go to my wife's home village, but the Khmer Rouge soldiers ordered us to Kandal Province instead.

My wife often traded things. When we first arrived in Kandal, she traded the three buckets of rice she brought from home for gold. Later, she exchanged that gold for more rice. But when the Angkar started cooperatives, there was little left to trade. I could not fill my stomach and ate only rice soup and vegetables. There was no meat and the soup was awful.

We had to work hard. One time, my son did not go to work in the rice field, so a cadre took him away to punish him. He pushed my son's head under water, put out his cigarette on my son's body, and then put biting ants on him. I consoled my son and told him to go to work in the field so he would not be punished again. Living with local people gave my family many troubles. Neighbours called us "A-Chin!" because my skin was fair and I looked Chinese.

The Angkar overheard this mocking word and ordered me to dig 25 bulb plantation rows in one day. If I could not complete this task, they said, I would be killed.

Just before 1979, the Angkar asked all the villagers to attend a meeting in the jungle around 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. I was in the field, but when my wife arrived, she saw cadres running in different directions, and heard the sounds of gunfire and bombs drawing near. "Please don't worry, the fighting is along the border," a cadre said. But soon all the villagers at the meeting also began running. She and the children ran to find me and we were reunited. On liberation day, I saw a Khmer Rouge document with my name on it. It said I was an ex-soldier and that my wife was a lazy worker. It gave the names of the two base people who reported me. I had never had any arguments with anyone, so I did not understand why these people wanted to hurt me.

Source: Documentation Center of Cambodia, <https://dccam.org/survivors/siv-sokh-kea-taxi-cab-owner>

3.3 Teaching with written and visual sources

When exploring any history, learners should be presented with a range of sources – primary and secondary; written, visual and oral. Works of art, literature and media can complement more expository materials. All classrooms, especially history classrooms, should incorporate as much variety as possible.

A range of sources are available when teaching about atrocity crimes, including films, photographs, novels, media reports, music, poetry, and artwork (see the resource list in the annex).

As with all historical analysis, sources should be carefully selected, and the context of their production considered: who produced them, why were they produced, and what is their effect on viewers?

Histories of atrocity crimes can be taught effectively without using graphic photographs or film footage. All images that show human rights violations, abuse or death, should be introduced to learners with sensitivity, and adequate time and space need to be set aside for learners to process any disturbing images or content they encounter. Respect for both the victims of atrocity crimes and for the learners in the educational setting demands careful thought as to what constitutes appropriate material. Due to the particularly emotional nature of audio-visual narratives, learners need time to analyze them, rather than simply taking them at face value. This is particularly true for images and documents created by perpetrator groups. Teachers should constantly question their use of sources and ask themselves what educational outcomes are served by using particular materials.²⁶

This section presents several possible ways of examining historical sources, texts and visual media.



²⁶ International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. 2019. *Recommendations for teaching and learning about the Holocaust*, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/IHRA-Recommendations-Teaching-and-Learning-about-Holocaust.pdf>

Written sources – Adding to a text

Material
pen and paper

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

→ Learners can interrogate written and visual sources and unpack stereotypes, false assumptions and pseudo-science.

A. INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE

The teacher explains to learners that they will be developing a practice of reading – often used by historians – called “annotation” or adding to a text. Annotation is a helpful way to read historical sources. This practice involves writing margin notes, circling words or phrases, and summarizing the main ideas of a primary or secondary source.

The teacher explains the value of such an activity by asking learners why they think historians annotate as they read. Some possible reasons include:

- ▶ It is a way to create better written arguments and helps us move beyond a simple reading of a source.
- ▶ It is a way of “talking to the text” and having a conversation with yourself as you read.
- ▶ It is a way to slow down your thinking as you read a difficult text, so that you read more closely and thoughtfully.
- ▶ It allows you to sort out the material – what you understand and what still doesn’t make sense.
- ▶ It is a way to ask questions that are connected to the text and that spur further investigation.
- ▶ It is a way to keep track of your thinking as you read so you can revisit and use that thinking later.

B. MODEL ANNOTATING A TEXT

The teacher shows learners how to annotate a short primary source document. The resource list in the annex provides some primary source documents. The teacher could copy the source onto the board and show the learners how to annotate or add to it as the teacher reads the source. If the teacher has the option, they could project their work from their computer as they annotate.

As the teacher is annotating, they demonstrate the different ways of adding to the text:

- ▶ Circle or underline key words. The teacher explains to the learners why these seem important.
- ▶ The teacher puts a question mark next to ideas to show they are not understood
- ▶ The teacher tells learners to ask questions like: Does this make sense? What does this say? What does this mean?
- ▶ The teacher shows how to write phrases or sentences above, below or next to the text that express your reactions, interpretations, and links to other ideas being studied.
- ▶ The teacher models how to take note of the author’s intentions and assumptions.

C. LEARNERS ANNOTATE A TEXT

The teacher gives learners a different short text to annotate on their own or in small groups. The teacher circulates around the class to give learners feedback on their annotations.

After they have read and annotated, learners compare their annotations and consider these questions:

- ▶ What did you write?
- ▶ How did it help you?
- ▶ How were your peers’ annotations different?

Written sources - Text-to-text, text-to- self, text-to-world

Material:
individual copies or class
copy of a primary
or a secondary source;
pen and paper

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Learners can interrogate written and visual sources to unpack prejudice and stereotypes, misconceptions and pseudoscience.
- Learners can apply knowledge from historical cases of atrocity crimes to make informed and meaningful connections to past and contemporary issues at local, regional and international levels.

A. INTRODUCE THE TEXT

The teacher chooses a primary or secondary source being taught. While this exercise uses the testimony of an enslaved person during the transatlantic slave trade, the same approach can be adopted for testimonies of different cases of atrocity crime. Some considerations for choosing a source:

- ▶ Does it encourage critical thinking and open further questions?
- ▶ Does the source match the learning outcomes for this unit?
- ▶ Is the source of an appropriate reading level?
- ▶ Do the learners have sufficient background information to make sense of the source?

If possible, the teacher provides each learner with their own copy of the text so that they can annotate and add to the text. Alternatively, copy a short piece onto the board for the class to discuss together.

The teacher explains to the learners that the purpose of the exercise is to help them make connections between the contents of the text they will be reading and:

- ▶ other sources they may have been exposed to
- ▶ their personal experiences and beliefs, and
- ▶ relatable events in their community or in the larger world.

The teacher explains why they chose this particular text for the learners to read.

B. GUIDE LEARNERS THROUGH “TEXT-TO-TEXT, TEXT-TO-WORLD”

Below are sample questions to guide learners through this activity. The questions suggested here are general and can be applied to any source and any context. The teacher is free to adjust them and make them specific to the particular case study of atrocity crime about which they are teaching.

Text-to-text: How does this text help us understand history?

Complete one of the following statements:

The ideas in this text are similar to the ideas in _____ because _____.

The ideas in this text are different from the ideas in _____ because _____.

What do you know about the author’s identity?

Race, gender, class, occupation, religion, age, region, political beliefs? Does any of this matter? How?

This person’s experience is different from mine.

To better understand, I would like to find out more about _____.

What historical questions can you answer using this source?

Does this text help us understand the different experiences of men and women?

Text-to-world: How do the ideas in this text relate to the larger world—past, present and future?

Complete one of the following statements:

Think about the purpose of the source. What was the author’s message or argument?

What was he/she trying to get across? Is the message explicit, or are there implicit messages as well?

What I just read makes me think about the past, because _____ .

What I just read makes me think about present issues/challenges because _____ .

What I just read makes me wonder about the future because _____ .

C. DEBRIEF

After working with the text individually, learners can share and discuss their responses with a partner using the *Think-pair-share* or *Save the last word* teaching strategies outlined in the *Encouraging and leading classroom discussion* section. This will give learners the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the text, of their classmates, and of the world around them.

The activity can also be used to generate inquiry questions to drive further investigation. The teacher gathers questions generated by the text and selects a couple of key follow-up questions to further support understanding. These might pertain to broader cultural, political, and economic contexts, other sources of historical information or ways to respond to what they have learned. The teacher supports learners to answer their inquiry questions through further research with other primary and secondary sources.



Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther's story

Ajayi, a Yoruba boy of 13-15 years old, was kidnapped and placed on board the *ESPERANZA FELIX* bound for Brazil with 181 other enslaved Africans. Britain had abolished trading in enslaved people in 1807 and slavery in 1834, and in their role as 'police' of the African coast, captured the ship off the coast of Lagos, Nigeria, and put the enslaved Africans ashore at Sierra Leone. There Ajayi grew up and became a Christian. In 1826-27 he attended school in England and later taught in Sierra Leone. In 1843, he published a study of the Yoruba language, and was ordained a priest in the same year. He was consecrated a Bishop in 1864 and became widely known as Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. In 1837 and 1841 he wrote extensive accounts of his enslavement experience.

For some years, war had been carried on in my Eyo Country, which was always attended with much devastation and bloodshed; the women, such men as had surrendered or were caught, with the children, were taken captives. The enemies who carried on these wars were principally the Eyo Mahomedans, with whom my country abounds - with the Foulahs, and such foreign slaves as had escaped from their owners, joined together, making a formidable force of about 20,000 who annoyed the whole country. They had no other employment but selling slaves to the Spaniards and Portuguese on the coast...

The morning in which my town, Ocho-gu, shared the same fate which many others had experienced, was fair and delightful and most of the inhabitants were engaged in their respective occupations. We were preparing breakfast without any apprehension when, about 9 o'clock a.m., a rumour was spread in the town, that the enemies had approached with the intention of hostility. It was not long after when they had almost surrounded the town, to prevent any escape of the inhabitants; the town being rudely fortified with a wooden fence, about four miles in circumference, containing about 12,000 inhabitants; which would produce 3,000 fighting men. The inhabitants not being prepared, some not being at home; those who were, having about six gates to defend, as well as many weak places about the fence to guard against, and, to say in a few words, the men being surprised, and therefore confounded - the enemies entered the town after about three or four hours' resistance.

Here a most sorrowful scene imaginable was to be witnessed! - women, some with three, four, or six children clinging to their arms, with the infants on their backs, and such baggage as they could carry on their heads, running as fast as they could through prickly shrubs, which, hooking their blies and other loads, drew them down from the heads of the bearers. While they found it impossible to go along with their loads, they endeavoured only to save themselves and their children: even this was impracticable with those who had many children to care for.

While they were endeavouring to disentangle themselves from the ropy shrubs, they were overtaken and caught by the enemies with a noose of rope thrown over the neck of every individual, to be led in the manner of goats tied together, under the drove of one man. In many cases a family was violently divided between three or four enemies, who each led his away, to see one another no more.

Your humble servant was thus caught - with his mother, two sisters (one an infant about ten months old), and a cousin - while endeavouring to escape in the manner above described. My load consisted of nothing else than my bow, and five arrows in the quiver, the bow I had lost in the shrub, while I was extricating myself, before I could think of making use of it against my enemies. The last view I had of my father was when he came from the fight, to give us the signal to flee...

In attempting to escape in the crowd with my mother, two sisters and a cousin, we were taken by two Yorriba Mahomedans who immediately threw nooses of cords around our necks and led us away as their prey... Scarcely had we got to the middle of the town when two Foulah men attacked our captors and contended with them about dividing their prey as they had not gone in time to get any.

My cousin was violently held on both sides; and my mother hearing the threats from the Foulahs to cut the poor fellow to pieces if four captors did not let him go; she treated them rather to give him over to the Foulahs instead of having him killed; our captors having some feelings of humanity, left the boy to them with whom they ran off with the fury of a tiger.

Source: UNESCO. Slave voices: the sounds of freedom. 1999.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187639?posInSet=3&queryId=16e07f68-d2a4-4087-b3c6-55888548ae9d>

Visual sources 6-Step image analysis

Material
copies of a visual source/
image (e.g. visual art,
propaganda images,
photographs, and political
cartoons); alternatively,
a projector; pen and paper

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

→ Learners can interrogate written and visual sources to unpack stereotypes, false assumptions and pseudoscience.

A. SELECT AN IMAGE

The teacher chooses an image relating to the history you are teaching that will allow for a deep analysis. Links to resources with visual material relating to the case studies of atrocity crime that are included in the annex of this guide.

This activity works best when using images that reflect a particular opinion, point of view or perspective. Visual art, propaganda images, photographs, and political cartoons are good examples of visual media to reflect a particular perspective.

B. GUIDE LEARNERS THROUGH THE 6-STEP IMAGE ANALYSIS

The teacher distributes the image in class, providing copies to each learner or a few copies to share. The teacher can also project or display the image in the classroom.

The teacher leads learners through the following six steps, pausing between each step to give them time to think and write.

- Step 1** Look deeply at the picture for a long time. Observe the shapes, colours, textures, the position of people and/or objects, etc.
- Step 2** Write down what you see without making any interpretation about what the picture is trying to say.
- Step 3** What questions do you have about this picture that you would need to have answered before you can begin to interpret it? You can ask as many questions as you have.
- Step 4** Pair up with someone near you and discuss your questions to try to find some answers.
- Step 5** Given the historical context and subject of the piece, what do you think the artist is trying to say (what does the piece mean), and who do you think is the intended audience?
- Step 6** Discuss your interpretation with the class and be prepared to support your view by referring to specific elements of the image and what you know about the history of the time.

C. DEBRIEF: DISCUSS THE PROCESS AS A CLASS

The teacher takes a few moments to debrief the analysis and ask learners what they noticed and what remaining questions they might have.

Note: For many, this process may feel uncomfortably slow, but through practice, learners will begin to respond more thoughtfully and critically to the images they encounter every day.

Visual sources See, think, wonder

Material
copies of a visual source
(e.g. a photograph,
political cartoon,
propaganda poster);
pen and paper

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

→ Learners can interrogate written and visual sources to unpack stereotypes, false assumptions and pseudo-science.

A. SELECT AN IMAGE

The teacher chooses an image from the history they are teaching — a photograph, political cartoon, propaganda poster — that will allow for a deep analysis.

B. GUIDE LEARNERS THROUGH SEE, THINK, WONDER

The teacher displays the image or passes out copies to learners. The teacher then asks the class the following three questions, allowing learners time to reflect after each question.

- ▶ What do you see? What details stand out? What do you observe? Don't try to interpret the image quite yet.
- ▶ What do you think is going on? What makes you say that?
- ▶ What does this make you wonder? What other questions does this image raise for you?

C. SHARING RESPONSES

After hearing each question, learners share their responses in pairs. The teacher then invites some learners to share what they have written with the rest of the class.

As with Activity 3.3.2 above, responses to “What does this make you wonder?” could result in inquiry questions that could drive future classroom research. As a class, the teacher and learners decide on key “wonderings” to pursue and take the time to investigate.

Why remembering the past matters

Material
copies of testimony; pen and paper

School level
upper secondary

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Learners can reflect critically on the impact of genocide and how important it is that history be learned and not forgotten. They are able to identify and analyze some of the mechanisms and effects of labelling individuals and groups, and the dangers of exclusionary and stereotyping rhetoric.

A. INTRODUCING UYISENGA

Depending on the resources available, the teacher hands out a copy of the handout to each learner or copies for groups of learners to share. Alternatively, the teacher can read the story to the class.

The teacher introduces and contextualizes the source explaining to the learners that the story they are about to read is the testimony of Uyisenga, who was a teenager when the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi happened. In 2008, Uyisenga shared her testimony with the UK based charity [Survivors Fund \(SURF\)](#) to mark the 15th anniversary of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

B. READING UYISENGA'S STORY

The teacher reads Uyisenga's story to the class. Because of the distressing nature of the text, it is important that the teacher evaluates the readiness of the learners to process the testimony. The teacher should also warn learners of possible triggers of graphic violence, including sexual violence ahead of the reading to give learners an opportunity to opt out and be given an alternative text or exercise.²⁷

The teacher should be present to support any learners and it is not ideal that learners read the piece on their own or as homework.

C. TALKING ABOUT UYISENGA

The first step the teacher takes after reading the story is to allow learners a chance to debrief. It is a distressing story and learners may be very affected as they read about someone who was also of school age when the events unfolded. The teacher asks learners to sit quietly for 30 seconds and to write down how they feel having listened to or read Uyisenga's story. The teacher then asks learners to get into pairs or triads to talk about Uyisenga's story by responding to the following questions together:

- ▶ What did Uyisenga do to try and save herself?
- ▶ Why do you think she says her family has more peace than she has?
- ▶ Did Uyisenga know why she was being attacked and chased?
- ▶ Why does Uyisenga say she is lucky not to know what happened to her family?
- ▶ What are the clues in what Uyisenga says that show us that she is still affected years after the events of 1994?
- ▶ Why does Uyisenga ask us to remember what happened to her?
- ▶ Why is it important for us to remember her story?

The teacher works through each of the questions with the class inviting different learners to share their insight from their discussions.

²⁷ Learners who opt out should be provided with a suitable alternative text or learning exercise.

The teacher concludes the lesson by asking learners to respond to the following three questions in a journal or on separate paper, and to support their thinking with examples from this lesson, current events, their family stories, and/or their own experiences.

1. Why might learning the stories of survivors of genocides and atrocity crimes and their descendants matter to me?
2. Why might learning the stories of survivors of genocides and atrocity crimes and their descendants matter to people around me (family, peers, community members)?
3. Why might learning the stories of survivors of genocides and atrocity crimes and their descendants matter to the world?

Teachers can find additional support on addressing gender-based and sexual violence in the classroom in the UNESCO guide *Connect with respect: preventing gender-based violence in schools*.²⁸

D. EXAMINING HISTORY

Once a safe and engaged learning environment has been established, and the learners have been introduced to the importance of understanding how identities can be constructed, changed, manipulated, and stigmatized, the class is better prepared to begin exploring histories of atrocity crime.

The pages that follow present a number of ways learners can examine and engage with these histories – whichever case studies are chosen. Suggested approaches and strategies can be found in the four sections below:

Introducing basic historical content

1. Bringing testimony into the classroom
2. Working with written and visual sources
3. Encouraging and leading classroom discussions



Uyisenga's story

Uyisenga's story was recorded in 2008 when she was 38 years old.

Uyisenga was 14 years old when the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda took place.

I do not cry for justice because it is beyond my reach, the horrors of genocide have been reduced to a mere manslaughter; no justice can bring back my sanity and life. I was there when the madness struck.

I was a child, and yet not really, I was only 14 years of age.

I don't know how I lost my family, all I know is that wherever they lie, they have more peace than I can ever achieve; pain and sorrow can never reach them.

I ran with different people in search of safety. Children, men, women, grandmothers, grandfathers, were struck with machetes, clubs and pangas. As they fell down, those with energy continued the journey, surrounded by heaps of mutilated and rotting bodies. I don't know why I was being chased, but it felt the right decision to run. Now I know I should have stayed put and joined the fate of my family.

My body was struck with sticks and machetes, but I still ran on. I was raped and abused, but still had the courage to keep running. You may say that I am brave and courageous. Yes, I have looked death in the face, and have paid a shocking price to survive. But in some ways, I was lucky. I did not see my family killed. Not knowing whether they were tortured or not, seeing babies shot and killed for target practice. This should never happen to anybody. Then the day of judgement came. I have buried my family; others do not know where their relatives lie.

I am among the many dead and yet I am not buried. I remain as a statement to what happened to a million others, for you and for the world to hear. This should never happen to anybody.

History has a way of repeating itself, don't allow it. By remembering me, you remember all those innocent victims. Moving forward and forgetting what happened is forgetting me. Then there will be no reason for me to live. I live to bear witness, to tell my testimony.

Source: SURF, Survivors Fund via the United Nations Office for Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, <https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/assets/pdf/survivor-testimonies/13%20-%20Uyisenga%202009.pdf>

28 UNESCO. 2021. *Connect with respect: preventing gender-based violence in schools; classroom programme for learners in upper primary and early secondary school (ages 12-15); teacher guide and classroom activities*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380633>

3.5 Encouraging classroom discussions

By engaging in discussion around the difficult topics that are a part of studying atrocity crimes, learners can develop listening and critical thinking skills, empathy, and a sense of civic agency and responsibility.

Teachers can use several discussion formats that are pedagogically sound and ensure that everyone is heard. The following activities support discussion aloud and through writing, to support varying learning styles.



Gonzalo Bell/Shutterstock.com

Conversations in pairs “Think, pair, share”

Material
pen and paper

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Learners can reflect critically on the impact of genocide and how important it is that history be learned and not forgotten. They are able to identify and analyze some of the mechanisms and effects of labelling individuals and groups, and the dangers of exclusionary and stereotyping rhetoric.

A. THINK

Learners reflect in writing on a given question or write a response to a prompt in their notebooks. These could be the “Text-to-text, Text-to-self, Text-to-world” questions in Activity 3.3.2 or the “See, think, wonder” questions from Activity 3.3.4, for example.

This gives learners the opportunity to respond thoughtfully to questions in writing before speaking.

B. PAIR

Learners pair up and share their responses. Since each learner comes to the discussion having already reflected in writing, there is more opportunity for meaningful dialogue with other learners about the issues being addressed.

C. SHARE

The learners report back in pairs, on their conversation. Alternatively, learners can share what their partner said. In this way, the strategy focuses on learners’ skills as careful listeners.

Conversations in groups “Save the last word for me”

Material
a reading, audio or video
excerpt; pen and paper

APPLICABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Learners can interrogate written and visual sources to unpack stereotypes, false assumptions and pseudoscience.
- Learners can apply knowledge from historical cases of atrocity crimes to make informed and meaningful connections to past and contemporary issues at local, regional and international levels.

A. SELECT A TEXT

The teacher identifies a reading, audio or video excerpt that can serve as the catalyst for this activity.

B. LEARNERS READ AND RESPOND TO THE TEXT

Learners to read or view or listen to the selected source.

Learners highlight three sentences that particularly stood out for them and write each sentence in their notebooks.

Learners explain underneath each sentence, why they chose that quotation - what it meant to them, reminded them of, etc.

C. LEARNERS SHARE IN GROUPS

The teacher divides the learners into three groups labelling one learner A, one B, and the other C in each group. The learners can work in threes with the people sitting next to them if space is an issue.

The A learners read one of their chosen quotations to their group.

Learners B and C discuss A's quotation. What do they think it means? Why do they think these words might be important? To whom?

After several minutes, the A learners read their explanation for why they chose that quotation. A Learners have a few moments after reading to explain anything should they need to. A can also respond to what B and C discussed. A, therefore, has “the last word”.

This process continues with the B learners sharing while C and A discuss and then the C learners share while A and B discuss.

D. DEBRIEF

The teacher asks learners what they noticed while they listened to their group members discuss their selected quotations. Did they learn anything new? Did they see something from a different perspective? Did they reaffirm or change their original response?

The teacher asks learners what they learned about listening during the activity. What behaviours helped them know their classmates were listening to them? How did they try to show they were listening to others? How might being a good listener be important in more difficult conversations?

Historical cases of atrocity crimes including genocide

The atrocity crimes committed against the Herero and Nama by the German colonial powers

According to the French Shoah Memorial:

“Between 1904 and 1908, approximately 80 per cent of the Herero people and 50 per cent of the Nama people living in the territory of present-day Namibia were exterminated by the forces of the [German] Second Reich, that is, approximately 65,000 Herero and 10,000 Nama.”²⁹

The formal colonization of German South West Africa dates from 1884. Initially the German presence was little more than symbolic. Dr. Heinrich Göring was sent by the German Chancellor Bismarck to negotiate “protection treaties”. However, as the German military and settler presence increased, local leaders and communities became concerned that they were losing their authority and their land. Colonial administrators and local leaders had conflicting views about land ownership. The German settlers were increasingly frustrated by the stubborn resistance of their, mainly, Herero and Nama, opponents. On the other hand, the Nama and Herero saw the German settlers as intruders who were increasingly robbing them of their land.

In January 1904, Herero Chief Ombara Samuel Maharero led a rebellion against the German colonial government. The German forces initially only had a small force of less than 800 men, but reinforcements, including machine guns and 1,000 horses were quickly shipped from Germany. The German Schutztruppe also included local troops from Rehoboth and Gibeon. Samuel Maharero wrote to the Nama leader, Hendrik Witbooi, appealing to him to join the uprising, but the letter never reached its destination.

On 11 June 1904 the German General Lothar von Trotha arrived in Namibia. After just over five months of conflict most Herero fighters and their families had gathered near the Otjozondjupa Mountain (today known also as the Waterberg).

The Battle of Ohamakari started on 11 August 1904 with two days of fierce fighting. The Herero retreated into the dry Omaheke (part of the Kalahari Desert) with General von Trotha ordering that waterholes be guarded or poisoned, resulting in thousands of deaths.

After the Battle of Ohamakari, thousands of Herero tried to escape with their cattle. Most tried to cross the Omaheke towards Botswana, whilst some sought shelter in the north. Thousands would die of hunger and thirst on their journey into exile and many descendants of the Herero survivors still live in Botswana.

The violence culminated in an official “extermination order” passed by General von Trotha in October 1904 aiming at the systematic murder of all Herero people.

Hendrik Witbooi led a rising of Nama communities in southern Namibia on 3rd October 1904, the day after the extermination order against the Herero had been issued. The Nama forces would wage a lengthy guerilla war against the Germans. Four months after General von Trotha had been forced to withdraw the Extermination Order against the Herero, he issued another proclamation in Gibeon, in southern Namibia, on 23 April 1905.

29 Mémorial de la Shoah, Le génocide des Herero et Nama, <https://www.memorialdelashoah.org/archives-et-documentation/genocides-xx-siecle/genocide-herero-nama.html>. Accessed on 4 May 2023.

After the withdrawal of the Extermination Order in December 1904, survivors were encouraged to gather at four collection camps which were established by the missionaries. However, instead of being allowed to return home, the survivors: men, women and children were then distributed to “concentration camps”.

After the war spread to southern Namibia, captured members of different Nama communities would also be sent to these camps.

The most notorious camp was on Shark Island in Lüderitz, with two other camps at Swakopmund and Windhoek. Smaller camps also existed at places like Karibib, Okahandja and Gibeon. When the Herero prisoners were released, the Nama prisoners who had survived Shark Island were kept at two camps at Okawayo (near Karibib) and Okanjande (near Otjiwarongo). They were only released when German colonial rule ended in 1915.

Atrocity crimes, including the genocide of the Jewish people, committed by the Nazis and their collaborators

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by Nazi Germany and its racist collaborators. The term “Holocaust” is a word of Greek origin meaning “sacrifice by fire”. The genocide of the Jews is also referred to as “Shoah”, the Hebrew word for “catastrophe”. For the Nazi regime, which came to power in Germany in January 1933, Jews were an existential threat to the so-called German racial community.

Antisemitism (prejudice or hatred of Jews) lay at the heart of Nazi beliefs. Antisemitic persecution escalated after Germany’s invasion of Poland in 1939 which began the Second World War. The Nazis isolated Jews in ghettos and deported them for slave labour and, ultimately, annihilation. The regime sought to erase Jewish life, culture, and religious tradition.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum explains the process of genocide:

“After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, German units began to carry out mass shootings of local Jews. At first, these units targeted Jewish men of military age. But by August 1941, they had started massacring entire Jewish communities. These massacres were often conducted in broad daylight and in full view and earshot of local residents.

The German units that perpetrated the mass shootings in eastern Europe included Einsatzgruppen (special task forces of the SS and police), Order Police battalions, and Waffen-SS units... In many places, local auxiliary units working with the SS and police participated in the mass shootings.

In late 1941, the Nazi regime began building specially designed, stationary killing centers in German-occupied Poland. In English, killing centers are sometimes called “extermination camps” or “death camps.” Nazi Germany operated five killing centers: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. They built these killing centers for the sole purpose of efficiently murdering Jews on a mass scale. The primary means of murder at the killing centers was poisonous gas released into sealed gas chambers or vans.

In 1945, the Allied Forces defeated Nazi Germany and its allies. Only one-third of Europe’s Jews survived the Holocaust.”

Other groups were also targeted from 1933 to 1945. The Roma were subject to racist persecution and genocidal killing.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum explains that:

“The Nazis classified Jews as the priority “enemy.” However, they also targeted other groups as threats to the health, unity, and security of the German people. The first group targeted by the Nazi regime consisted of political opponents. These included officials and members of other political parties and trade union activists. Political opponents also included people simply suspected of opposing or criticizing the Nazi regime. Political enemies were the first to be incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps. Jehovah’s Witnesses were also incarcerated in prisons and concentration camps. They were arrested because they refused to swear loyalty to the government or serve in the German military.

The Nazi regime also targeted Germans whose activities were deemed harmful to German society. These included men accused of homosexuality - they were not contributing to the building of the so-called “racial stock”- persons accused of being professional or habitual criminals, and those the Nazis referred to as “asocial” (such as people identified as vagabonds, beggars, sex workers, pimps, and alcoholics). Tens of thousands of these victims were incarcerated in prisons and concentration camps. The regime also forcibly sterilized and persecuted Germans of African descent.

People with disabilities were victimized by the Nazi regime. Before the Second World War, Germans considered to have supposedly unhealthy hereditary conditions were forcibly sterilized. Once the war began, Nazi policy radicalized. People with disabilities, especially those living in institutions, were considered both a genetic and a financial burden on Germany. These people were targeted for murder in the so-called Euthanasia Programme. Nazi doctors and nurses murdered some 200 000 children, women and men deemed “unfit”.

The Nazi regime employed extreme measures against groups they considered so-called “racial”, “civilizational”, or ideological enemies. This included Poles (especially the Polish intelligentsia and elites), Soviet officials, and Soviet prisoners of war.”

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Introduction to the Holocaust.” Holocaust Encyclopedia. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust>. Accessed on 25 April 2023.

Atrocity crimes, including the genocide against the Cham Muslim and ethnic Vietnamese minorities in Cambodia, committed by the Khmer Rouge regime

Between 1975 and 1979, under the Khmer Rouge regime, an estimated one quarter of the country's population perished as a result of the regime's programme of harsh internment and torture, and subjecting many Cambodians to inhumane living conditions, starvation, forced labour, forced marriages, and execution. The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) have classified these acts as crimes against humanity.

In November 2018 the ECCC declared that the Khmer Rouge regime also committed genocide against the Cham Muslim and ethnic Vietnamese minorities by implementing and executing a policy to target religious and racial groups with an "intent to establish an atheistic and homogenous society without class division by abolishing all ethnic, national, religious, racial, class and cultural differences".³⁰

According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,

"From April 17, 1975, to January 7, 1979, the Khmer Rouge perpetrated one of the greatest crimes of the 20th century. Nearly two million people died under the rule of the fanatical Communist movement, which imposed a ruthless agenda of forced labor, thought control, and mass execution on Cambodia. The purported goal was to transform the Southeast Asian country into a classless agrarian utopia.

The Khmer Rouge began their reign with the murder of surrendering officials of the former government and the brutal emptying of the capital and other cities. Black-clad soldiers marched millions of people into the countryside and put them to work as slaves digging canals and tending crops. Religion, popular culture, and all forms of self-expression were forbidden. Families were split apart, with children forced into mobile labor brigades.

Anyone who questioned the new order risked torture and death by a blow to the head. Ethnic minorities faced particular persecution. Not even members of the Khmer Rouge were safe. The movement killed thousands of its own as suspected traitors and spies for foreign powers. In time, gross mismanagement of the economy led to shortages of food and medicine, and untold numbers of Cambodians succumbed to disease and starvation."

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Introduction» Cambodia 1975-1979.» Genocide Prevention Country Case Studies. <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/cambodia/case-study/introduction/cambodia-1975>. Accessed on 25 April 2023.

³⁰ The conviction was upheld in 2022 by the appellate court.

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda has become known as one of the darkest periods in modern history. More than 1 million people - overwhelmingly Tutsi, but also moderate Hutu, Twa and others who opposed the genocide - were systematically and brutally killed in less than three months between April and July.

Prior to the colonial era, Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa lived in relative harmony. The Tutsi (14% of the population) were the cattle herders, soldiers and administrators, the Hutu (85%) were the farmers, and the marginalized Twa (1%) were hunter-gatherers or potters. Individuals could and did move between the categories of Tutsi and Hutu as their fortunes rose and fell, and intermarriage was not uncommon. It was not until Belgian colonization and the introduction of identity cards distinguishing between the three groups that the tensions between the Hutus and Tutsi became focused on race.

In 1962, Rwanda regained independence from colonial rule and the country became governed by political parties associated with the Hutu majority. Under Hutu rule, the Tutsi faced discrimination and violence, and thousands fled to neighbouring Burundi. Within Rwanda, Hutu extremists among the country's political elite blamed the Tutsi population for the country's increasing social, economic, and political pressures.

Civil war broke out in Rwanda on 2 October 1990, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded Rwanda from the north. Hutu extremists accused all Tutsis of supporting the rebels operating outside the country.

Meanwhile, extremist Hutu leaders were secretly drawing up lists of Tutsi and moderate Hutu leaders to assassinate and arming and training youth militias who were responsible for some small-scale massacres. These killings were documented by local and international human rights organizations as well as by a special envoy of the UN Commission on Human Rights. The Rwandan government said the killings were spontaneous and uncontrollable and no one was brought to justice. The international community classified the violence as part of an internal conflict.

This civil war officially ended with the signing of the Arusha Accords, a power sharing agreement, in August 1993. While Hutu leaders signed the agreement, its terms angered Hutu extremists, setting the stage for future violence. During this time, the extremists disseminated messages through the media telling their fellow Hutus that the Tutsi were planning a killing campaign against them. Radio RTLM, a private Hutu-owned radio station, relentlessly condemned Tutsi and those opposing Hutu extremists, characterizing them as subhuman and calling them "cockroaches".

On the evening of 6 April 1994, a surface-to-air missile shot down the plane carrying Rwanda's president, Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, as it was landing in Kigali, the Rwandan capital. Under the cover of war, Hutu extremists launched their plans to destroy the entire Tutsi civilian population. Violence spread with lightning speed through the capital and into the rest of the country and continued for roughly three months. Over one million people, predominantly Tutsi, were slaughtered in 100 days. Hutu militias, backed, trained and equipped by Rwandan government forces, were responsible for the majority of the killing. As the level of violence became clear, groups of Tutsi - and Hutus who feared they might be targeted - fled to places that in previous times of turmoil had provided safety: churches, schools, and government buildings. Many of these refuges became the sites of major massacres.

By the time the RPF, led by today's President Paul Kagame, ended the killing in July, over a million people had been murdered. Between 250,000 to 500,000 women had been raped, many deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS. Many children were orphaned.

After the RPF victory, UN troops and international aid workers arrived to help maintain order and restore basic services. A new multi-ethnic government was formed on 19 July 1994, which promised all refugees a safe return to Rwanda. Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu, was inaugurated as president.

The international community largely ignored the Rwandan 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, labeling it an "internal conflict." The major powers at the United Nations discouraged international intervention. While there was an international media presence in Rwanda, journalists also largely portrayed the conflict as a civil war and did not highlight the intentional killing of civilians. It was left to the human rights and humanitarian organizations on the ground to document and disseminate the vital information about civilian targeting to the public and policy-makers.

Many survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda lost their entire families - spouses, parents, children, extended families, and friends - and have suffered complex health problems, like HIV/AIDS, as a result of sexual violence during the genocide. Large numbers live in dire poverty. Many have developed long-term psychological problems as a result of their trauma. But survivors have also shown enormous strength by creating groups to help each other, preserving important sites as memorials, and rebuilding their lives, at times alongside the very people who perpetrated the genocide.

Seven months after the genocide began, the United Nations established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in neighbouring Arusha, Tanzania, to bring to justice those accused of high-level crimes. In addition to the formal ICTR proceedings in Arusha, the government of Rwanda instituted an innovative adaptation of local justice inspired by tradition, called gacaca.

Source: Adapted from: <https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/historical-background.shtml>; The Outreach Programme on the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the United Nations, accessed on 25 April 2023.

The transatlantic slave trade and slavery

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, approximately 28 million healthy African women, men and children were captured, ripped from their homes and communities and forced to march to slave ships that took them across the Atlantic to the Western Hemisphere. Shackled in pairs with metal chains around their ankles and ropes around their necks, and subjected to violence and abuse, approximately half of the men and women perished on these forced marches. Of the 14 million who made it to the African coast, only two thirds survived the 5000-mile voyage. The “middle passage” as the route is called, lasted one to three months, in the inhumanely cramped and disease-ridden hold of a ship. Many died of starvation, dysentery and suicide. The remaining 7.4 million Africans, upon arrival in the Americas and the Caribbean, were sold into slavery. Half were to die of disease, hunger, exposure, overwork and brutality.³¹

This mass atrocity, referred to by some Africans and African Americans as the *Maafa*, a Kiswahili term for great trauma, has been understood as the longest and most extensive genocide in human history.³² In addition to the physical and psychological harms inflicted by the inhumane treatment, enslaved Africans also suffered cultural trauma by being forcibly removed from their homelands, and being forbidden to continue their cultural rituals and practices.³³ This cultural trauma has marked legacies in today’s African American communities, as attempts have been made to recognise, re-energise, re-interpret and re-legitimise some of the African cultures and traditions.

This historic trauma has left a lasting legacy beyond what was experienced directly by those Africans who were captured and enslaved, and their descendants. This legacy is perhaps most evident in contemporary Africa. When European and African slave traders sought to capture African men and women who were at their prime, especially the physically fit and healthy, they left behind the elderly, the disabled and the vulnerable.³⁴ The impact of this, alongside the culture of fear and insecurity due to the centuries of violent slave trade, as well as ongoing colonization, imperialism and socioeconomic exploitation and deprivation, contributed to the continuing political and economic challenges encountered by most African countries.³⁵

It is estimated that over 6 million people are currently subjugated to forms of ‘modern slavery’ in sub-Saharan Africa. One of the widest spread and most damaging legacies of the slave trade is racism, institutionalized, cultural and structural, which has repercussions on all continents of our planet, as the basis of xenophobia, discrimination, prejudice and dehumanization. Racism is the consequence of a prefabricated “myth of race”; which was used to allow atrocities to be committed throughout the slave trade and slavery.³⁶ Nearly 200 years after Haiti formally abolished slavery in 1804, and over 100 years since Brazil, the last nation to formally abolish slavery did so in 1888, people of African descent living outside of the African continent have continued to experience racism in many different guises.

Source: Adapted from: https://healingthewoundsofslavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UNESCO-GHFP_2020_Healing-the-Wounds-of-Slavery_Desk-Review_Report.pdf UNESCO and GHFP Research Institute. *Healing the Wounds of Slave Trade and Slavery*. 2021.

31 J. H. Sweet. 2003. *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press

32 N. Witmann. 2016. ‘Reparations — Legally Justified and *Sine qua non* for Global Justice, Peace and Security’, *Global Justice: Theory Practice Rhetoric*, 9(2): 199–219

33 E. Koh. 2019. *Cultural Trauma and Its Healing*. Presentation to GHFP/UNESCO Symposium *Collective Healing of Traumas: New Possibilities for Peace in Communities*, RSA.

34 Britannica, *Transatlantic slave trade*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/transatlantic-slave-trade>

35 J.-M. Deveau. 1997. *European Slave Trading in the Eighteenth Century*, *Diogenes*, 45(179): 49–74

36 Britannica, *The decline of “race” in science*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/race-human/The-decline-of-race-in-science>

Additional resources

Below is a list of useful resources for further information on the four case studies included in this guide.

The atrocity crimes committed against the Herero and Nama by the colonial German powers

- South African History Online
www.sahistory.org.za/article/timeline-german-and-herero-nama-war-and-genocide

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

- United Nations Outreach Programme on the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the United Nations
www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/
- Kigali Genocide Memorial - <https://kgm.rw>

Atrocity crimes, including the Holocaust, committed by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators

- The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme
www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum www.ushmm.org
- Yad Vashem: the World Holocaust Remembrance Center - www.yadvashem.org
- Shoah Memorial
www.memorialdelashoah.org
- Anne Frank House
www.annefrank.org/en/

Atrocity crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia

- The Documentation Centre of Cambodia
<http://dccam.org>
- Cambodian Genocide Project
<https://gsp.yale.edu/case-studies/cambodian-genocide-program>

Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

- United Nations Outreach Programme on the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery
www.un.org/en/rememberslavery
- UNESCO Routes of Enslaved Peoples
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-rights-inclusion/slave-route>

Genocide Education

- Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre
www.jhbholocaust.co.za
- Aegis Trust
www.aegistrust.org
- Facing History and Ourselves
www.facinghistory.org
- USC Shoah Foundation
<https://sfi.usc.edu>
(IWitness <https://iwwitness.usc.edu/home>)
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries

General History of Africa

- UNESCO
<https://en.unesco.org/general-history-africa#collection>

Global Citizenship Education

- UNESCO
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced>
- GCED Online Campus -
www.gcedonlinecampus.org



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United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization



United Nations

Teaching to prevent atrocity crimes

A guide for teachers in Africa

This guide seeks to assist teachers from Africa in preparing and designing lessons about atrocity crimes, including genocide. It provides teachers with background knowledge, teaching principles and concrete pedagogies to educate about complex histories and to navigate related classroom discussions. The guide has been developed with and for African teachers taking into consideration local contexts and needs. It aims to support teachers in strengthening historical literacy, critical thinking and solidarity among learners to overcome prejudice and to contribute to more peaceful and inclusive societies.



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