



THE WEST AFRICA
CITIZEN THINK TANK

What are the African values today?

WATHI5

WATHI's recommendations following the debate on African values. Follow this link to the page dedicated to this debate: www.wathi.org/valeurs-africaines/

COURSE OF ACTION

- 1** Identify traditional and current African values by setting up in each country a multidisciplinary reflection committee tasked to organize a national debate aimed at defining shared values. They will conduct opinion surveys to identify what different age groups consider to be African values that could be promoted and reinforced to build better societies; and identify in an inclusive manner the core common values that should be promoted nationally and regionally.
- 2** Define various ways and frameworks for the transmission of values by integrating the identified values as cornerstone in national education systems as early as in kindergarten; by integrating community service in secondary school curriculum; by using the media to communicate messages to parents about the importance of dedicating time for the transmission of values to their children; by informing parents about the importance of empowering childcare workers who often take care of their children in their absence, and by encouraging media through incentives to disseminate news based on promoting African values.
- 3** Empower the actors in charge of transmitting values by setting up frameworks of discussion among all educators in order to establish innovative methods of transmitting African values within schools; by institutionalizing meetings between local and national opinion leaders and pupils in order to promote intergenerational dialogue on the importance of values; by selecting respected and credible personalities from the domain of culture and sports that will promote African values among youths.
- 4** Develop original methods of conveying and promoting African values by drawing inspiration from traditional socialization approaches, such as initiation ceremonies and rites of passage, so as to design institutions and activities with the same objectives of preserving cultural heritages and transmitting values from one generation to the next; by using modern social networks and media in popularizing African values; by providing support to companies specializing in the creation of contents for young people (cartoon, video games, etc.) which value local, national and African cultural resources; and by making African languages promotion in education systems essential to the explanation and transmission of African values.
- 5** Define and implement national policies and regional guidelines on child protection and development based on the realities of today's daily life, by explicitly pointing out the importance of transmitting fundamental values (equality between men and women, respect for diversity, justice, equity, empathy, solidarity) from an earlier age; by supervising the broadcasting by television channels of programs, video clips and all inappropriate audiovisual programs not suitable for young audiences; by assessing the impact of early exposure to a multitude of television, internet and social networks on children's early intellectual, mental and moral development, and by conducting information and awareness campaigns for parents.

Very often in public and private speeches references are made on African values, either to celebrate them or to deploy that they are no longer what they used to be. WATHI invited the citizens of countries of the region, from all generations, to question the so-called «African» values in today's societies, all of which in a context of accelerated globalization in recent decades have become subjected to strong external influences.

This document WATHI5 proposes five ways to guide the collective action of citizens and decision-makers in order to identify African values, to define ways of transmitting them in order to develop a knowledge of common values and a strong cultural identity in the countries of the region and throughout the African continent. WATHI5 is the format dedicated to the recommendations of Mataki, which summarizes WATHI debates.

1. Identify traditional and current African values by:

- Setting up in each country a reflection committee comprised of anthropologists, sociologists, ethnologists, historians, religious and traditional leaders, traditional communicators, youth and women associations working to organize multi-phase national debates on the definition of shared values.
- Organizing in each country citizen opinion polls based questionnaires by specializing institutions in each country for two purposes:
 - ✓ The identification of what different age groups of the population consider to be African values, and those of the cultural community they belong to;
 - ✓ The identification of the values that should be promoted among children to build better societies.
- Combining the findings of the work of the reflection committee and the results of the surveys to collectively agree on a common set of values that will be promoted at the national level in each country.

2. Define modes and frames for the transmission of values by:

- Incorporating core values identified in the education systems:
 - ✓ In kindergartens, by developing didactic materials (stories, games, dances and songs) that convey values that are recognized as fundamental for building peaceful societies and nations, cultivating shared cultural, and promote economic and social progress

- ✓ Rehabilitate and/or enhance civic and moral education in elementary schools to enable pupils to learn the basics of social life
- ✓ At secondary school, plan as part of school curricula discussion sessions among pupils on collective values so that they can question, discuss and assimilate these values.
- ✓ Offer an introduction to community service that would be integrated in secondary school curriculum. This could be for instance a volunteering work for a reduced number of hours of the year in schools or in the school neighborhood (health centers, activities to promote hygiene and preservation of the environment, assistance to the elderly, etc.)
- Influencing the family circle where the first agents of value transmission are located;
 - ✓ Use the media to communicate simple and clear messages about the critical importance of parenting education for the future well-being of children and society
 - ✓ Raise parents' awareness on the importance of spending meaningful time with their children in order to participate effectively in the transmission of values
 - ✓ Inform parents about the importance of giving clear guidelines, mentoring and empowering caregivers in their absence – whether these are other family members, «nannies» or 'domestic workers', about appropriate behaviors, comments and actions
 - ✓ In rural areas, encourage women's associations, elderly people with moral authority in the community, and women and men who are recognized for their wealth of knowledge of ancient traditions and knowledge, to play a key role in transmitting values to children.
- Encouraging, through incentives (media support), the media to disseminate content focused on African values education, adapted to young audiences and adults.

3. Empower the actors in charge of transmitting values by:

- Establishing platforms for discussion among all educators to establish innovative ways of transmitting African values within schools
- Inviting parents every year to share with pupils their visions of African values and ways to live and promote these values in their everyday lives

- Institutionalizing citizen meetings between local and national opinion leaders (political actors, local authorities, civil society actors, economic actors) and pupils in order to allow intergenerational dialogue on the issue of values
- Selecting respected and credible figures from the domain of culture and sport who can promote African values among youth and society as a whole.

4. Develop original modes of transmission and promotion of African values by:

- Drawing inspiration from traditional process of socialization such as initiation ceremonies, rites of passage and other traditional practices in order to design institutions or activities with the same objectives of preserving cultural heritages and transmitting values from one generation to another
- Utilizing modern networks of communication and socialization, including social media and networks, to popularize African values
- Providing special support to companies specialized in creating contents (cartoon, video games, etc.) for young people which value local, national and African cultural resources
- Promoting African languages in education systems as an essential dimension to explain and transfer African values.

5. Define and implement national policies and regional guidelines for child protection and development based on the realities of daily life by:

- Establishing explicitly as one of the basic educational objectives from earliest age the transmission of values (equality between men and women; respect for cultural, ethnic, religious and social diversity; justice, equity, empathy and solidarity) – whether considered genuinely African or not – which are essential for building peaceful societies

- Supervising and restricting, through appropriate measures, the broadcasting by national and international television stations of programs, video clips and all other audiovisual programs which are not appropriate for young audiences. These measures could include mandatory minimum age requirements for specific television programs, a ban on the broadcast of some programs during usual family television time, strict regulation and supervision of child-oriented advertisement
- Regularly assessing the impact of early access to a multitude of television channels, the Internet and social networks via mobile phones on children’s intellectual, mental and moral development, through surveys and scientific studies, and taking appropriate measures, including information and awareness campaigns for parents.

The debate and recommendations on values echo two previous WATHI debates: one on the promotion of West African cultural heritage, and the other on the improvement of the quality of primary and secondary education in the region. Culture and education remain essential pathways for redefining and conveying values. This is also the domain that demands citizen-led actions through extensive coalitions building and beyond political differences.

You can send your comments, reactions, recommendations to refine the proposals and the means to implement them to the following address: ledebat@wathi.org

WATHI

WATHI, the West Africa citizen think tank, is a participative and multidisciplinary think tank which aims to contribute to the sharing of knowledge and the production of ideas on the crucial political, economic, social and cultural issues for the present and the future of the countries of West Africa.

The geographical area of WATHI includes 15 countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as well as Cameroon, Chad and Mauritania. Freely inspired by «waati», which means «time» in Bamanankan language of Mali, WATHI expresses both the urgency of a collective mobilization and the need for long-term commitment.



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