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UNESCO IICBA

2023 Progress Report

March 2024

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The International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), a category 1 UNESCO institute, is based in Addis Ababa. Founded in 1999, it aims to inform education policies, strengthen teacher professional development, and build capacity in education institutions, including Ministries of Education. To provide innovative solutions and scale-up efforts to improve educational outcomes in Africa, IICBA works with a range of partners, including the African Union, UN agencies, other international organizations, development banks, bilateral donors, foundations, teacher organizations, school networks, and non-profits.

Published in 2024 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

and

UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (UNESCO IICBA)

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Report 2024-1

UNESCO IICBA

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Acknowledgment

This report assesses progress made by UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) in the implementation of its new strategic plan for 2023-25. The report was written by Quentin Wodon and designed by Daniel Ergetachew with inputs from IICBA staff and consultants, including Eyerusalem Azmeraw, Maryann Dreas, Temechegn Engida, Salilish Endrias, Tirsit Gebreselassie, Elisabeth Belay, Lucas Halimani, Njora Hungi, Victoria Kisaakye, Yvonne Mboya, Gabriel Mekbib, Kasumi Moritani, Samuel Mulugeta, Saliou Sall, Lamin Sanneh, and Kevine Uwingabiye. Support for IICBA's work from members of its Governing Board, including Victor Borges, Gerd Hanne Fosen, Wang Li, Albert Nsengiyumva, Dennis Sinyolo, Irene Onyancha, and Solomon Shiferaw, is also gratefully acknowledged. The author and IICBA's team benefited from conversations with many colleagues at UNESCO and other institutions. Any errors and omissions are however those of the author alone.

Suggested citation: UNESCO IICBA. 2024. *UNESCO IICBA 2023 Progress Report*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: UNESCO IICBA.

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Foreword

The International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), a Category 1 UNESCO institute, is based in Addis Ababa. Founded in 1999, it aims to inform education policies, strengthen teacher professional development, and build capacity in education institutions, including Ministries of Education. To provide innovative solutions and scale-up efforts to improve educational outcomes in Africa, IICBA works with a range of partners, including the African Union, UN agencies, other international organizations, development banks, bilateral donors, foundations, teacher organizations, school networks, and non-profits. IICBA is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year at the same time as the African Union has designated 2024 as the Year of Education.

IICBA had a great year in 2023. Thanks to record resource mobilization, IICBA's planned budget for 2024 is at four times the average budget in the last five years, enabling the Institute to have a larger impact. Furthermore, IICBA expanded its capacity enhancement activities by launching an Executive Education and Policy Academy, it invested in research and policy dialogue to inform capacity enhancement activities, and it strengthened its external communications and partnerships.

IICBA's work is guided by a new three-year strategic plan approved by the Institute's Governing Board in March 2023. This report provides an overview of IICBA's progress in 2023 towards implementing the new strategy. Thanks to major gains achieved in 2023, as IICBA celebrates its 25th anniversary during the African Union's Year of Education, it is in a strong position to deliver on its core mandate encapsulated in its new motto: *"Empowering teachers for all learners to thrive."*

Dr. Quentin Wodon
Director, UNESCO IICBA



Photo: Part of IICBA's team based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In 2023, the Institute also had staff or core consultants in Canada, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, and the US. Photo credit: UNESCO IICBA.

Introduction

IICBA's New Strategic Plan 2023-25

The Institute's Governing Board approved IICBA's new strategic plan in March 2023. The plan has clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and three main lines of action: (1) research and knowledge; (2) policy dialogue and advocacy; and (3) capacity enhancement. The theory of change is simple: research informs policy dialogue and advocacy, which in turn helps in setting priorities for capacity enhancement. This report provides an overview of IICBA's progress in 2023 towards implementing the new strategy.

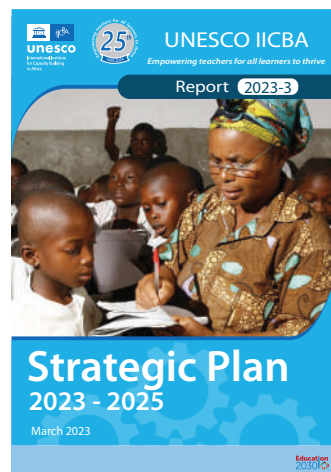
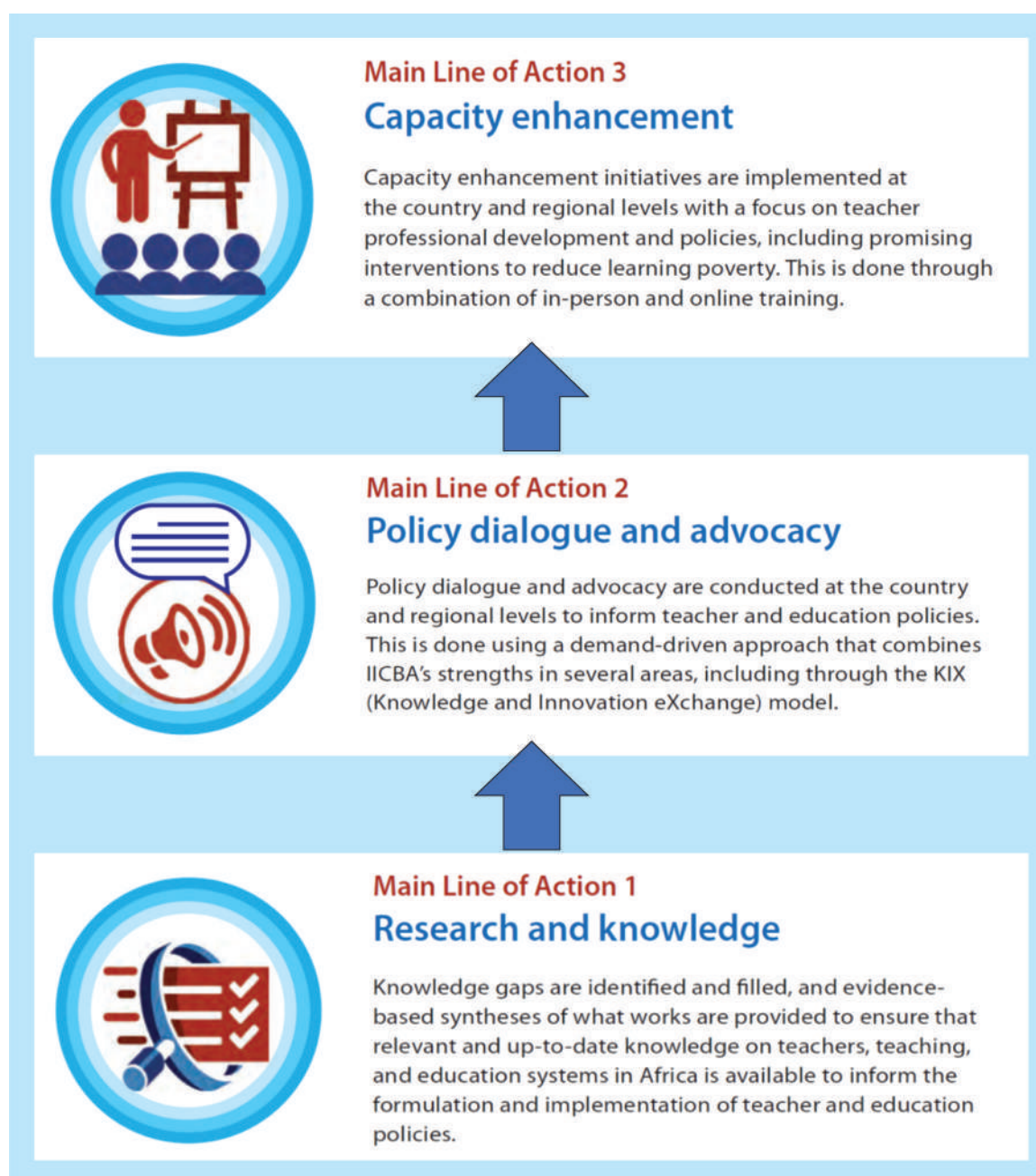


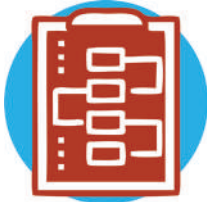







Figure 1: Main Lines of Action of IICBA's Strategic Plan 2023-25



Outline of the Report and Selected Achievements

This report outlines progress made in 2023 by IICBA towards implementing its strategic plan. The first section discusses resource mobilization. This is followed by an overview of achievements in the three main lines of action of the Institute's strategy. The next four sections discuss transversal themes, namely promoting innovation, building partnerships, improving communications, and assessing performance. Selected achievements by IICBA's team in 2023 are summarized below.

Table 1: Selected Achievements in 2023

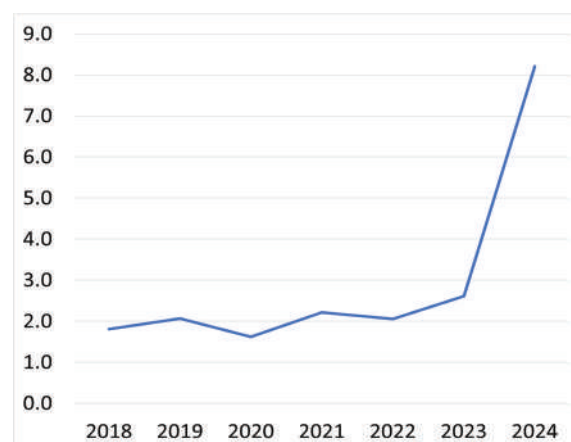
Resource Mobilization and Main Lines of Action			
			
<p>1. Mobilizing Resources</p> <p>\$17 million in expected new funding from grant applications submitted in 2023.</p>	<p>2. Investing in Research</p> <p>Launch of new publication series (Studies, Discussion Papers, Briefs, etc.).</p>	<p>3. Engaging in Policy Dialogue</p> <p>Number of participants in policy dialogue events more than doubled.</p>	<p>4. Enhancing Capacity</p> <p>Launch of the Executive Education and Policy Academy and webinar series.</p>
Transversal Themes			
			
<p>5. Building Partnerships</p> <p>Expanded work with partners such as AFTRA, the African Union, and others.</p>	<p>6. Promoting Innovation</p> <p>Communities of practice and innovative work in areas such as mental health for teachers.</p>	<p>7. Improving Communications</p> <p>New website, blog, and newsletter with five-fold increase in website users in the latest data.</p>	<p>8. Assessing Performance</p> <p>Key Performance Indicators at 3 times the targets set in the strategic plan.</p>

1. Mobilizing Resources



Major progress was achieved towards resource mobilization with an expected \$17 million in new funding from applications submitted in 2023 (a few small grants are still to be confirmed). This amount includes multi-year allocations and funding for new projects implemented with partners, in which case part of the funding is allocated to the partners. Thanks to funding applications in 2023 for projects that will start in 2024, the Institute's budget for 2024 is expected to increase four-fold compared to the average of the last five years (Figure 2). This will enable IICBA to have a larger impact in countries as well as with its continental and regional partners. Box 1 lists IICBA's main projects as of February 2024.

Figure 2: Trend in IICBA Revenues (US\$ Million, Cash Basis, 2018-2024)



Note: Reporting on cash basis differs from financial statements where revenues may be accounted for in a subsequent year due to donor reporting requirements.

Box 1: List of IICBA's Main Projects as of February 2024

1. Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX Africa 19 Hub)

Funding: US\$5.9 million from the Global Partnership for Education and Canada's IDRC, 2020-27. IICBA manages the KIX Africa 19 Hub project with UNICEF ESARO and the African Union's IPED as consortium partners. The Hub facilitates cross-country knowledge exchange and mobilization among anglophone countries.



Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

2. European Union's Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa

Funding: US\$5.5 million from the European Union, 2024-2029. Together with UNESCO HQ and the Teacher Task Force, IICBA supports the European Union's Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa. This project covers analytical, policy, and capacity enhancement.



Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

3. Capacity-building of Teachers to Promote Continuous and Inclusive Access to Safe and Quality Education for Girls in West Africa

Funding: US\$3.3 million from the Government of Japan (grant-in-aid), 2024-26. This project contributes to accelerating progress towards girls' education in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Nigeria through quality and safe learning environments.



Photo Credit: UNESCO

4. Professionalization of Teaching in Asia-Pacific and Africa

Funding: US\$2.0 million from the Municipality of Shanghai Funds-in-Trust, 2021-26. This project aims to develop regional technical guidance for developing and operationalizing national teacher competencies and teaching standards frameworks.



Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

5. Creating Safe, Supportive, and Resilient Learning Environments Amid Conflict and Crises in the Sahel, Central, and East Africa

Funding: US\$1.2 million from the Government of Japan (supplementary budget), 2024-25. This project seeks to create safer, more supportive, and more resilient learning environments amidst security crises in the Sahel, Central Africa, and East Africa.



Photo Credit: UNICEF/Habib Kanobana

6. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Teachers and Students in Three Conflict-affected Regions of Ethiopia for Safe School Return

Funding: US\$0.9 million from the Government of Japan (supplementary budget), 2024-25. This project seeks to enhance well-being and learning among teachers and students in conflict-affected areas of northern Ethiopia in the context of school reopening.



Photo Credit: United Nations/Tobin Jones

7. Research on Teacher Professional Development and Other Related Issues

Funding: Variable, through research grants from multiple organizations. As part of its new strategic plan for 2023-25, IICBA has strengthened its research capacity to inform policy dialogue and capacity enhancement. Recent grants include funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, EYElliance, ICHEI, and likely grants from several other partners.



Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

8. Support to UNESCO Regional and Country Offices

Funding: Variable, through Ministries of Education and decentralized funding from UNESCO Regional Offices. IICBA provides expertise on teacher professional development and education system strengthening to UNESCO's Regional Offices in Africa (Dakar, Harare, Nairobi, Rabat, and Yaoundé).



Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

9. Support to UNESCO HQ Programs and Secondees

Funding: Variable, through funding for both staff positions and programs. IICBA manages several UNESCO programs for selected African countries or with a continental scope with funding provided by UNESCO HQ for staff positions as well as activities. The two largest programs currently are CapED (Capacity Development for Education) and O3 (Our rights, Our lives, Our future).



Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

10. Other Projects and Activities

Funding: Variable. IICBA manages or co-leads a range of other activities. This includes support for the African Union Year of Education (2024), managing the Teacher Development Cluster under the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-25, co-leading the China-Africa Deans of Education Forum with Beijing National University and UNESCO INRULED, and developing a new eLearning platform.



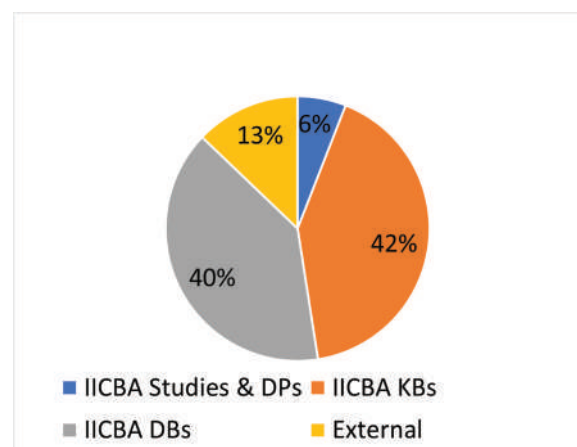
Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA

2. Investing in Research



Conducting research to inform policy dialogue and capacity enhancement is a new area of focus. In 2022, IICBA had one research publication, a short brief. In 2023, the Institute launched new publications series. As shown in Figure 3, most research publications are short, including Knowledge Briefs (KBs) and Data Briefs (DBs). But some are more extensive, such as Discussion Papers (DPs), IICBA Studies, and external publications. Within Studies, the Africa Teachers Reports (ATRs) sub-series is given more visibility. The first ATR was drafted in 2023 and published in January 2024 and released at events organized by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Apart from conducting research, IICBA promotes the use of research in policy. In 2023, a key event was the KIX Continental Symposium (Box 2). IICBA also started to work with the Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities to jointly publish the *Journal of Teaching and Learning in Africa* starting in 2024 (Box 3). Box 4 outlines IICBA's main new publication series.

Figure 3: Research Publications in 2023



Note: External publications include journal articles, book chapters, and other externally published research. Shares of publications by type are approximate as some outputs from 2023 are still being added to the website.

Box 2: Bringing Researchers and Policy Makers Together: The KIX Continental Symposium

The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Africa 19 Hub is managed by IICBA with funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The African Union and UNICEF are consortium partners. The Hub supports 18 anglophone countries plus Mozambique to accelerate progress toward equitable, inclusive, and quality education. This is done through inter-country knowledge exchange, learning, and collaboration. A separate Hub, KIX Africa 21, serves francophone countries. To promote the use of evidence in policy, the two Hubs jointly organized the 2nd KIX Continental Symposium in Abidjan in October 2023 attended by close to 300 researchers, policy makers, and stakeholders from over 40 countries. In the post-event survey, virtually all participants said the event helped them (1) identify research, evidence, good policies, and practices to strengthen their education systems and (2) build new or stronger relationships with education stakeholders.



Photo: Claris Ujam, KIX Focal Point at the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria, presented her research on teacher preparation in Nigeria at the KIX Symposium in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in October 2023.

Box 3: The Journal of Teaching and Learning in Africa

IICBA started to work with AFTRA to expand and upscale the Journal of Teaching and Learning in Africa, which so far focused on publishing one issue per year with short articles based on papers presented at the annual AFTRA conference. Starting in 2024, IICBA and AFTRA will jointly publish the journal with at least two issues per year and full research papers. The journal will welcome contributions all-year and feature special issues. The first two issues planned for publication in 2024 will be on school leadership and teacher professional development. The journal will be indexed in various databases and it will be promoted by both AFTRA and IICBA to reach larger audiences.

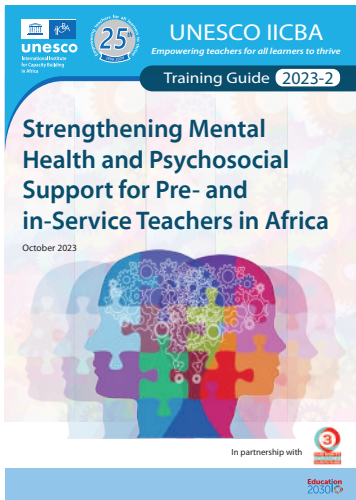


Box 4: IICBA's New Publication Series

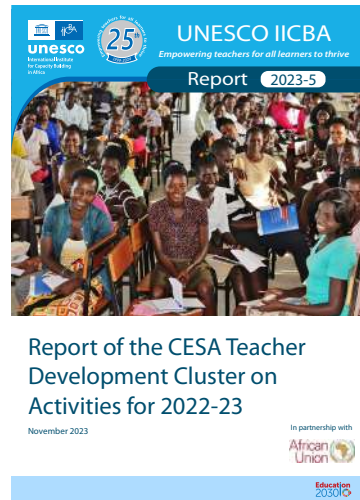
As part of an effort to better communicate the Institute's work while also using a common visual identity, IICBA launched new publication series in 2023. This includes IICBA Studies, Training Guides, Discussion Papers, Knowledge Briefs, and Data Briefs. In addition, the Reports series includes the Institute's strategic plan, progress reports for programs or for IICBA overall, independent evaluations, reports to UNESCO or donors, and financial statements. Brief descriptions of the main publication series are provided below.



IICBA Studies are report-length analytical work with new empirical analysis or a synthesis of existing work on a topic.



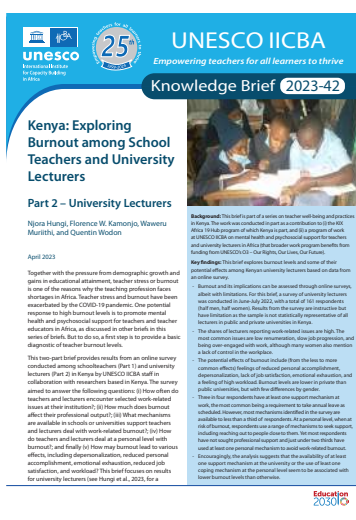
IICBA Training Guides provide practical guidance for teachers, school leaders, ministry officials, or other education stakeholders.



IICBA Reports are corporate publications such as reports to donors, independent evaluation, or strategy documents.



IICBA Discussion Papers are article-length pieces of analytical work exploring a particular question.



IICBA Knowledge Briefs are short analytical pieces providing rapid access to new evidence or analysis on a specific question.



IICBA Data Briefs are short briefs focusing on providing data on specific issues typically across a large set of countries.

Apart from the above publication series, IICBA also launched in 2023 other series, including a series for interviews (as discussed in Box 14). All publications are available on the Institute's website.

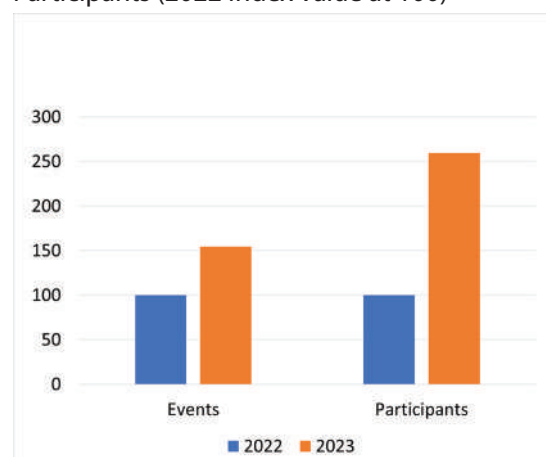
3. Engaging in Policy Dialogue



IICBA has long been involved in policy dialogue on teacher issues, but the Institute expanded its activities in 2023. IICBA organized or participated in 34 events focusing on policy dialogue

(versus 22 events in 2022), reaching an estimated 4,492 individuals (versus 1,731 in 2022). Figure 4 provides the data with estimates for 2022 normalized at an index value of 100. Box 5 illustrates how IICBA engages in policy dialogue through one of its programs (CapED). Box 6 shows how IICBA works with its partners such as the Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Agencies (AFTRA) to engage in policy dialogue at low cost through existing flagship events, in this case AFTRA's annual conference.

Figure 4: Policy Dialogue Events and Participants (2022 Index Value at 100)



Box 5: Advising Countries on Teacher Policies – The CapED Programme

As an example of engagement in policy dialogue, IICBA provides technical guidance to Ministries of Education in four countries through the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) Programme. CapED is a global initiative, active since 2003, with a focus on 20 least developed countries. By leveraging UNESCO's technical expertise in coordination with partners, the initiative provides countries with the capacities they need to achieve national education priorities that reflect internationally agreed goals to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. It also supports countries in the development of new robust education policies, more gender-sensitive curricula, high quality education staff, and better access to vocational training. IICBA leads the CapED program in several countries in Africa. In Zambia, IICBA worked with the Teaching Council of Zambia and the Teaching Service Commission on a national framework for social dialogue and the development of a comprehensive teacher policy. A consultative meeting was held in December 2022, leading to a roadmap for capacity building and training on how to institutionalize social dialogues. Interactive training workshops were held in June 2023 on teacher policy development and the institutionalization of social dialogues with participants from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Teaching Council of Zambia, teacher unions, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, teacher educators from teacher training colleges and universities, and practicing teachers. A team from the Ministry of Education is now undertaking a comprehensive assessment of teacher issues that will inform the national teacher policy.



Photo: Participants at a policy dialogue event in the Zambia discuss how to institutionalize social dialogues and prepare a comprehensive teacher policy. Photo credit: UNESCO IICBA.

Box 6: Partnerships for Policy Dialogue – The Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Agencies



IICBA has increased its presence across Africa through partnerships. One example is the partnership with the Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities (AFTRA), an intergovernmental organization comprising the Ministries of Education and national agencies regulating teaching. In 2023, AFTRA’s annual conference had over 300 participants from all over the continent. For the first time, IICBA organized a half-day event at the conference. Building on this experience, apart from presentation in plenaries, IICBA will organize with AFTRA and the African Union three events at the 2024 conference: (i) a consultation for the review of the African Union’s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025); (ii) a consultation on a draft continental mental health and psycho-social support strategy for teachers; and (iii) a half day training strengthening school leadership. Starting in 2024, as mentioned in Box 3, IICBA will also co-publish with AFTRA the *Journal of Teaching and Learning in Africa*.

The 2023 AFTRA conference was held in Windhoek, Namibia. It welcomed about 300 participants, including Ministers of Education and Heads of Teacher Service Commissions. The 2024 conference will take place in Lusaka, Zambia.



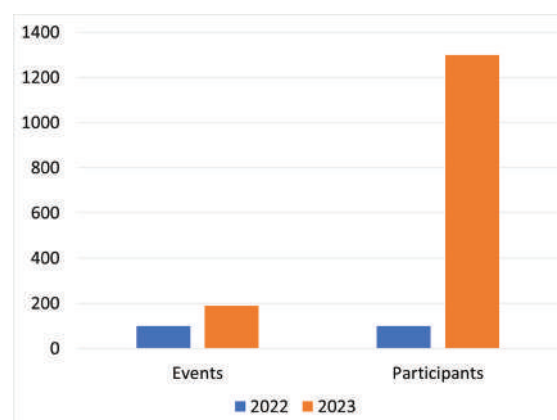
Photo: Ministers, agency representatives, and selected participants at AFTRA’s 2023 Conference. Photo credit: AFTRA.

4. Enhancing Capacity



Enhancing capacity through training is at the core of IICBA's mandate. As in other areas, the Institute expanded its activities in 2023. IICBA organized or participated in 36 training events (versus 19 events in 2022), reaching an estimated 9,135 individuals (versus 703 in 2022). Figure 5 provides the data with estimates for 2022 normalized at an index value of 100. Box 7 illustrates IICBA's capacity enhancement work with the Shanghai Fund-in-Trust project on the professionalization of teaching in Africa. The Executive Education and Policy Academy, a new initiative launched in 2023, is briefly described in Box 8.

Figure 5: Training Events and Participants (2022 Index Value at 100)



Box 7: Capacity Enhancement and Experience Sharing – The Shanghai Trust-in-Fund Project

The project for the Professionalization of Teaching in Asia-Pacific and Africa funded by the Municipality of Shanghai Fund-in-Trust aims to develop regional technical guidance for developing and operationalizing national teacher competencies and teaching standards frameworks. It is implemented by UNESCO Bangkok in Asia and IICBA in Africa with a particular focus on Sierra Leone and The Gambia. For World Teachers' Day, IICBA published three studies based on the project for teachers and school leaders in Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and West Africa. The analysis considers: (1) the national frameworks of professional standards and competencies and its implementation; (2) teacher education, both pre-service and in-service; and (3) the working conditions of teachers and school leaders. It relies on a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach including analysis of nationally representative household surveys, online surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups. The work is being expanded Africa-wide, with on-demand follow-up training provided for Sierra Leone and The Gambia.

Study 2023-2
Republic of Sierra Leone:
 Situation Analysis of the national framework of professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders
 October 2023
 Steve Nwokeocha, Aminata Sessay, Njora Hungi, and Quentin Wodon

In partnership with:
 - Shanghai Municipal Government of the People's Republic of China
 - Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education of Sierra Leone
 - Teaching Service Commission of Sierra Leone

Study 2023-3
Republic of The Gambia:
 Situation Analysis of the national framework of professional standards and competencies for teachers and school leaders
 October 2023
 Steve Nwokeocha, Ebrima D. Kah, Njora Hungi, and Quentin Wodon

In partnership with:
 - Shanghai Municipal Government of the People's Republic of China
 - Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education of The Gambia

Study 2023-4
West Africa – Investing in Teachers and School Leaders:
 Professional Standards, Working Conditions, and Teacher Education
 Draft - October 2023
 Steve Nwokeocha, Ebrima D. Kah, Chata Malé, Hungi Njora, Aminata Sessay, and Quentin Wodon

In partnership with:
 - Shanghai Municipal Government of the People's Republic of China

“Positive developments are worth emphasizing. After receiving the initial report of UNESCO IICBA’s Situational Analysis, the Ministry has been working hard to address identified gaps... A Cabinet Paper on Recommendations, Guidelines, and Procedures for a Credit Mapping Framework that Allocates Appropriate Credits to Teachers for Approved In-Service Training Courses was approved by the Cabinet. In addition, a High-Level Policy Consultation on Continuous Professional Development will be developed into a Cabinet Paper to be jointly presented by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education. This comprehensive CPD framework for teachers in Sierra Leone will be based on quality reforms of key entities, providing enhanced alignment, linkages, accountability, and coordination in the governance of teacher professional development to make pathways for advancement transparent and equitably available to all teachers. The IICBA study has been an important milestone on the path to professionalizing teaching and school leadership in Sierra Leone and beyond.”

Hon. Mr. Conrad Sackey, Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education of Sierra Leone.

Box 8: IICBA's New Executive Education and Policy Academy

Through a range of course and events of various lengths, IICBA shares results from research (its own and that of others) through the Executive Education and Policy Academy launched in 2023. The Academy targets officials in Ministries of Education and other education and civil society leaders to equip them with the knowledge they need to improve teacher policies and education systems. Courses are adapted to meet specific demands from beneficiaries. Examples of courses and events are listed below. In addition to the Academy, IICBA launched a new webinar series with a dozen webinars held in 2023.



5. Building Partnerships



IICBA's work is growing, but the Institute remains small while the need for teacher professional development in Africa is massive. Partnerships are essential for achieving impact. In 2023, IICBA deepened its existing partnerships and expanded others. Beyond examples mentioned in other sections of this report, two examples are provided in Boxes 9 and 10: (i) the partnership with FAWE and UNICEF for self-paced eLearning courses on gender-responsive pedagogy; and (ii) the growing partnership with the African Union ahead of 2024 as the Year of Education. In 2023, IICBA also partnered with an increasing number of UNESCO regional offices, UNESCO Institutes, and teams at UNESCO HQ for specific activities.

Figure 6: Selected IICBA Partners and Donors



Box 9: Partnerships for Capacity Enhancement – Gender-Responsive Pedagogy Online Courses

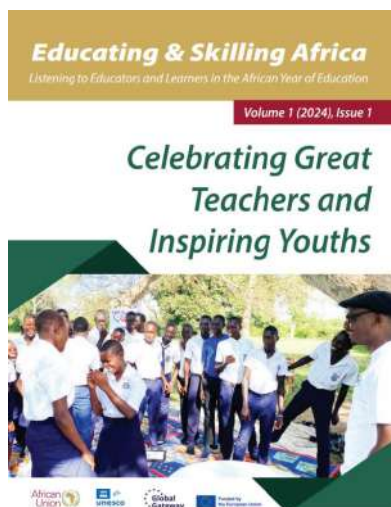
IICBA launched at the end of 2023 a revamped online platform with self-paced eLearning courses. The first set of two courses focuses on Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) and was designed by IICBA in collaboration with UNICEF and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), building on FAWE’s toolkit on the topic. The courses were featured at FAWE’s triennial conference in Nairobi in November 2023. They synthesize best practices on GRP pedagogy and related findings from research on gender inequality in the African context. The next step will be to adapt to country needs and promoted its use by Ministries of Education and Teacher Service Commissions.



Box 10: IICBA’s Growing Partnership with the African Union

IICBA has expended its partnerships with a range of organizations, including the African Union which, as mentioned earlier, has designated 2024 as the Year of Education. Collaborations with the African Union include the following:

- *Management of the Teacher Cluster under the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-25:* IICBA manages the Teacher Cluster under CESA. The latest report on cluster activities is [here](#).
- *Support for the annual African Union Continental Best Teacher Award:* IICBA supports the African Union for the annual Awards. Interviews with 2023 award recipients are available [here](#).
- *Completion of series of interviews:* Apart from interviews with winners of the Continental Best Teacher Award, interviews in partnership with the African Union were conducted with inspiring youths for Africa Youth Day and peace educators for the International Day of Education.
- *Projects on girls’ education and contexts of emergencies with the International Centre for Girls’ and Women’s Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA):* IICBA and AU/CIEFFA are implementing new projects on girls’ education and teachers in contexts of emergencies with funding from Japan.
- *Partnership with the Pan-African Institute for Education for Development (AU/IPED):* AU/IPED is a consortium partner with IICBA and UNICEF ESARO for the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Africa 19 Hub funded by GPE and Canada’s IDRC.
- *Launch of the first Africa Teachers Report:* Drafted in 2023, the report was launched in January 2024 at an event with the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
- *Launch of the Educating & Skilling Africa Magazine:* For the African Union Year of Education, IICBA and the African Union ESTI Department launched the new quarterly magazine.
- *Contributions to African Union Events:* IICBA participated in more than a half dozen events organized by the African Union in Addis Ababa, at the UN in New York, and virtually.



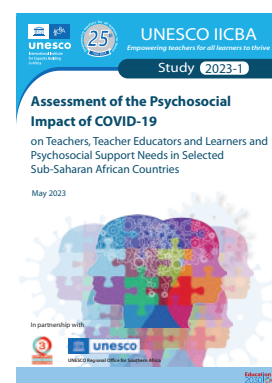
A New Quarterly Magazine

The Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Department at the AU and IICBA worked in 2023 towards the launch of a new magazine entitled “Educating and Skilling Africa”. The subtitle of the publication is “Listening to Educators and Learners in the African Year of Education.” The plan is to initially produce four issues of the magazine in 2024, assess the initiative by the end of the year, and pursue the publication beyond 2024 if the initiative is deemed successful. The magazine is published with support from the European Union’s Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa. By listening to those who work hard every day on the ground to make a difference, a principal aim of the magazine will be to share insights on what works to improve lifelong educational opportunities for Africa’s population, especially children and youth.

6. Promoting Innovation



Africa is confronted with a major learning crisis with nine out of ten 10-year-old children not able to read and understand an age-appropriate text. Sharing experiences on what works to reduce learning poverty and ensure that all children complete their secondary education is key. Box 11 illustrates how south-south learning can be facilitated through communities of practice. Teacher shortages are another challenge, with too many teachers experiencing burn-out and at risk of leaving the profession. Investing in mental health and social support (MHPSS) for teachers and learners is essential. IICBA has developed expertise in this area through analytical work – including a study on the impact of COVID-19, and pilot trainings (Box 12). Thanks to new funding, IICBA will work on MHPSS in a dozen countries.



Box 11: Sharing Good Practices: A Community of Practice on Gender Inequality in Education

As part of activities under the KIX Africa 19 Hub, IICBA held a short course and community of practice on gender equity in education. Three dozen policy actors and practitioners shared ideas through case studies, assessments, and toolkits, with presentations by experts and gender officers from Ministries of Education. When asked about the effectiveness of the short course, all respondents said that the sessions made a significant difference in their understanding of gender-responsive education. As a government officer from Uganda put it: *“The case studies helped me to reflect on the issue we have in our education system in Uganda... we can actually transform our education if we use the gender-transformative approaches.”* Thanks to new funding raised from the Government of Japan in 2023, IICBA will be able to promote girl’s education in a half dozen West African countries in 2024.

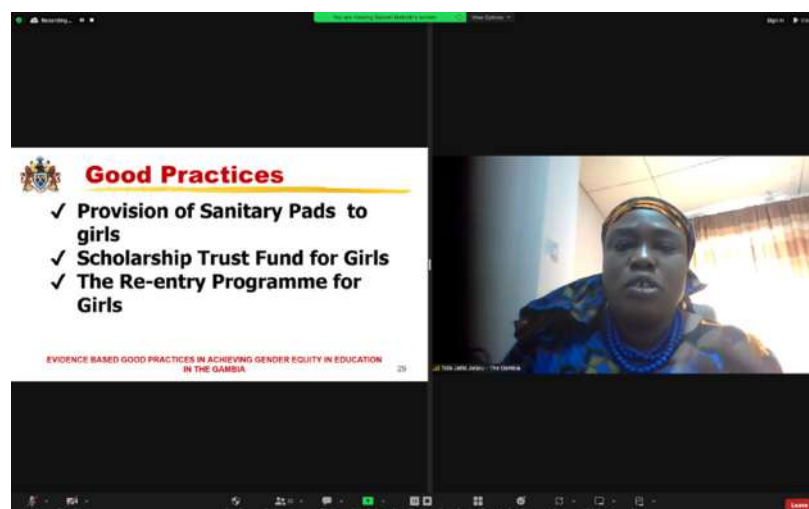


Photo: A government officer from The Gambia shares good practices on gender-responsive education at a virtual meeting of the community of practice on gender. Photo credit: UNESCO IICBA.

IICBA relies on a demand-led approach when organizing communities of practice (CoPs). Before launching the CoP, a survey was conducted among KIX Africa 19 focal points and focal points from the Africa Union’s International Centre for Girls’ and Women’s Education in Africa. Among 38 respondents from 15 countries, 87% were “definitely” interested in personally joining the course and CoP and the rest were “probably” interested or needed more information. Among a list of topics that could be explored, two thirds mentioned gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP) as a priority. Other topics of high interest (over 20 respondents indicating “very high interest”) included (i) Understanding gender inequality and gender-responsive education; (ii) Analyzing the root causes of gender inequality in education; (iii) Enabling and hindering factors and policy environments for GRESP; (iv) Identifying strategies and alliances to advance gender equality; (v) Programs for keeping girls in secondary school and second chance programs for girls who dropped out; and (vi) Programs for improving girls’ participation in STEM education. Topics also of interest included: (i) Gender-responsive budgeting and financing; (ii) Measuring the benefits from educating girls; (iii) Simulation tools for the potential and cost of programs; (iv) Approches to increasing the share of women teachers and school leaders; (v) Recruitment, retention, deployment, and support of women teachers; and (vi) Gender-transformative and gender-responsive pedagogy. The CoP was then designed to cover these various topics.

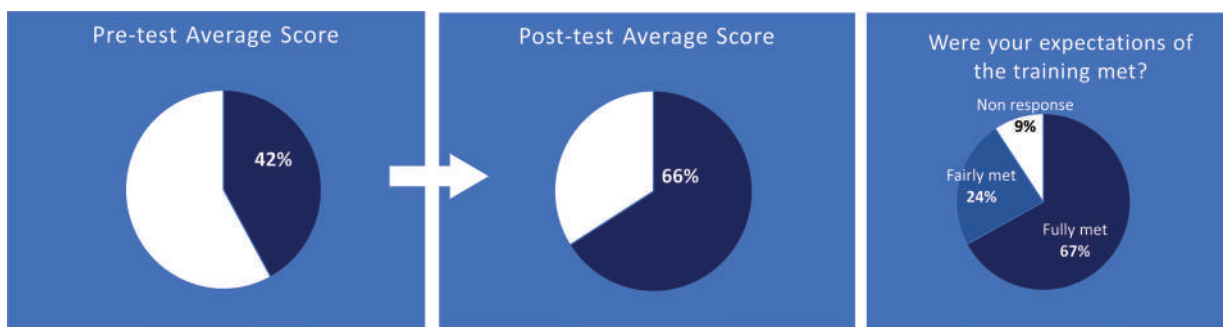
Box 12: Promoting Innovation: Mental Health and Psycho-social Support for Teachers

Mental health and well-being have received increasing recognition following the COVID-19 pandemic. A growing body of evidence focuses on the interconnectedness of education, health, and well-being. With funding from UNESCO's O3 (Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future) programme, IICBA conducted a study on the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on in-service teachers, teacher educators, and learners, the causes of this negative impact, and innovative strategies governments could employ to address these challenges. Next, the Institute developed with Aha Psychological Services a training guide on mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) for teachers. The guide was piloted through face-to-face training in Eswatini and Ethiopia and online training in Kenya and Malawi. Each training was coordinated in cooperation with the Ministries of Education and UNESCO offices to capacitate Ministry of Education officials, teacher educators, school leaders, and teachers. The next step was a regional training held for master trainers in May 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa with six master trainers per country (Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Uganda). Each country team developed a national action plan. Following the regional training, three country-level training workshops were organized in Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda. Assessments conducted among participants to the trainings suggest high levels of satisfaction and an improvement in knowledge (see the visual below). Thanks to new funding raised from the Government of Japan through grant applications submitted in 2023, IICBA will be able to provide training on MHPSS to teachers in a half dozen countries in 2024.



Photo: Participants in the multi-country workshop for master trainers held in South Africa. Photo credit: UNESCO IICBA.

Figure 7: Pre- and Post-Training Event Knowledge and Satisfaction Rate with the Event



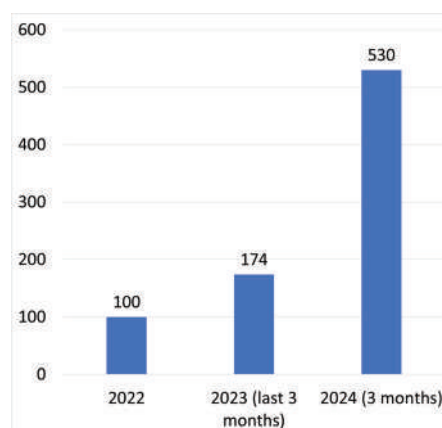
7. Improving Communications



Steps were taken in 2023 to strengthen communications, including: (1) the adoption of a new motto and visual identity; (2) the launch of a new website; and (3) as of October 2023, the launch of a weekly

blog and electronic monthly newsletter. Through these and other steps, the Institute’s visibility has increased, including, a five-fold increase in website users according to the most recent data which takes into account the more recent initiatives (Figure 8). Website “events,” a measure of engagement, increased significantly more over the same period. Other communications initiatives in 2023 included reaching out to news media on specific occasions (Box 13) and launching an interview series to communicate via stories (Box 14).

Figure 8: Increase in Monthly Website Users (2022 Index Value at 100)



Box 13: IICBA’s Outreach to African News Media and Launch of IICBA’s Blog

In the fall of 2023, IICBA started a more systematic outreach to selected African news media, including through OpEds and taking advantage of international days such as World Teachers’ Day (October 5) and Africa Youth Day (on November 1). As a result, the Institute was mentioned more often in the press. Examples of Nigeria news outlets that mentioned IICBA over the last three months of 2023 are listed below.

Illustrative News Coverage: IICBA in Nigerian News in October-December 2023



In October 2023 for World Teachers’ Day, IICBA launched a new weekly blog. The blog features essays by IICBA staff as well as other essays from policy makers, researchers, teachers, and other education stakeholders. Many essays are about teacher policies and professional development (pre- and in-service), but other essays related to education systems and how to improve both schooling and learning are also welcome. Essays may focus on any education level, from preschools to primary and secondary education, TVET, and higher education.

Box 14: Communicating through Stories: IICBA's New Interview Series

IICBA's Interviews series was launched in 2023. It consists of transcripts of interviews with educational leaders, including teachers, ministry officials, staff from civil society organizations, or researchers. The objective is to share experiences in a more personal way than can be done with typical research publications. A total of 24 interviews were conducted in 2023 in three series: (i) A series for Africa Youth Day in partnership with the Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate of the African Union Commission; (ii) A series with winners of the African Union 2023 Continental Best Teacher Award in partnership with the African Union's ESTI Department; and (iii) A series with education practitioners and researchers associated with the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Africa 19 Hub. All interviews are available in print, but some are also available in video. The list of interviews with links is provided below.

Interview Series for Africa Youth Day

- Francis Bizoza, Pan Africanist and education enthusiast: [Print](#)
- Simon Peter Kaweesi, Founder of The Student Hub: [Print](#)
- Ann Maria Nassanga, Artist and film maker: [Print](#)
- Ousseynou Gueye, Directeur Exécutif de Polaris Asso: [Print](#)
- Olga Tusala Katembo, Volontaire permanente du Mouvement International ATD Quart Monde: [Print](#)
- Jocelyne Cyiza Kirezi, Economist and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist with VVOB: [Print](#)
- Zigwai Tagwai, ONE Global Activist and Rotary Positive Peace Activator: [Print](#)
- Rossette Kyakyo, Founder of SYRADO (Slum Youth Rehabilitation and Development Org. Uganda): [Print](#)
- Emmanuella Luanda Musafiri, Refugee Youth Representative for UNHCR: [Print](#)

Interview Series with Winners of the African Union 2023 Continental Best Teacher Award

- Nundraj Goindo, Mauritius: [Print](#)
- Rosemary Bosibori Onyancha, Kenya: [Print](#)
- Sid El Moctar Yadali, Mauritania: [Print](#)
- Bismark Kwame Tunu, Ghana: [Print](#)
- Vasiliki Viki Mpompolas, South Africa: [Print](#)
- James Zimba, Malawi: [Print](#)
- Adeola Adefemi, Nigeria: [Print](#)
- Laila El Baghazaou, Morocco: [Print](#)



Photo: James Zimba teaching in Malawi. Photo credit: James Zimba.

Quotes from the interviews with Winners of the African Union Continental Best Teacher Award

Ms. Rosemary Bosibori Onyancha, Kenya

"One of our proudest accomplishments has been achieving a 100% return of girls to the school after the pandemic... Another high point was students coming up with a glider using carton boxes making them recyclable, reusable, and reducing wastage. This is a practical action in the SDGs. As I reflect on my journey, my enthusiasm remains unwavering."

Mr. James Zimba, Malawi

"I am from a poor family background. I attended my primary school in the rural setting with no role models apart from my teachers and other civil servants... No wonder I am a teacher! ... I had one thing in focus: to ensure that my students benefit from my experience of a poor background but making it possible to achieve high in education."

Ms. Laila El Baghazaou, Morocco

"I used to focus on examinations and grades more than the process of learning because the students are haunted by exams at the end of the school year. Recently, I started to convince my students to focus on the process of learning because it will help them with their examinations more than concentrating on the examination itself."

Interview Series from the KIX Africa 19 Hub Phase 2 Inception Meeting

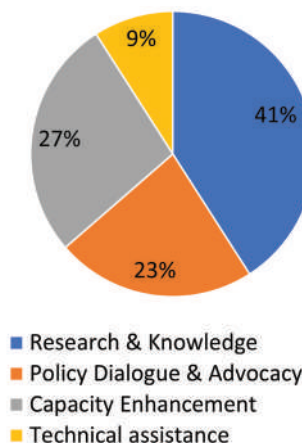
- Dr. Betty Ezati, Makerere University and Chair of the UNITE Task Force in Uganda: [Print](#) and [Video](#)
- Dr. Steve Nwokeocha, University of Calabar and Executive Director of AFTRA: [Print](#) and [Video](#)
- Lorato Palesa, Gender Data Research Officer with AU/CIEFFA: [Print](#) and [Video](#)
- Joy Nafungo, Senior Program Officer with IDRC: [Print](#) and [Video](#)
- Shirazu Inusah, Head of Policy Unit in the Ministry of Education, Ghana: [Print](#) and [Video](#)
- Phumzile Magagula, Educational Planner with Ministry of Education, Eswatini: [Print](#) and [Video](#)
- Dr. Claris Ujam, Deputy Director, Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria: [Print](#) and [Video](#)

8. Assessing Performance



IICBA's new strategic plan includes 22 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to its three main lines of action: (1) Research and knowledge; (2) Policy dialogue and advocacy; and (3) Capacity enhancement, with special attention to 4) Technical assistance as one component of capacity enhancement. When baseline indicators for the KPIs were available, the targets set in the strategy were higher, often by a large amount. Still, on average across the three main lines of action, targets were substantially exceeded (a separate report on KPIs is being prepared). Beyond monitoring KPIs, IICBA assesses its performance through independent evaluations (Box 15) and beneficiary surveys and assessments (Box 16).

Figure 9: Share of KPIs by Area

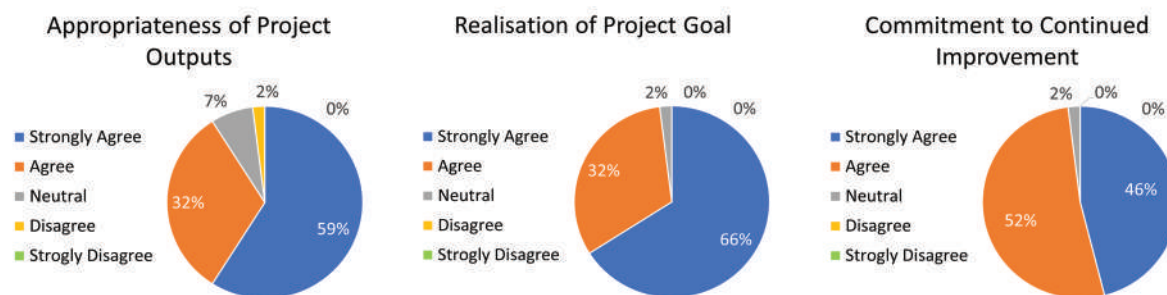


Box 15: Independent Project Evaluations – Preventing Violent Extremism through Education



IICBA funds independent evaluations for projects above \$1 million. In 2023, one such evaluation was completed for a project on the prevention of violent extremism through education. It concluded that: *“In terms of effectiveness, the project components and objectives were relevant, project outputs were appropriate and well used, the project main goal was realized, teamwork was achieved, and the project had a high level of visibility. In terms of efficiency, internal structures were well utilized to achieve project objectives, value for money realized, project scope fully covered, resources and funds well distributed and managed, all project activities implemented as planned and project targets were met. In terms of sustainability, local stakeholders were involved, government departments participated in the project, stakeholders were committed to continuously supporting project activities, the Training of Trainers (ToT) strategy was used to extend training to various training institutions, peace clubs were established to continue activities with support from the training institutions, local resources were used to support project activities and peace education was integrated in the traditional training curriculum.”*

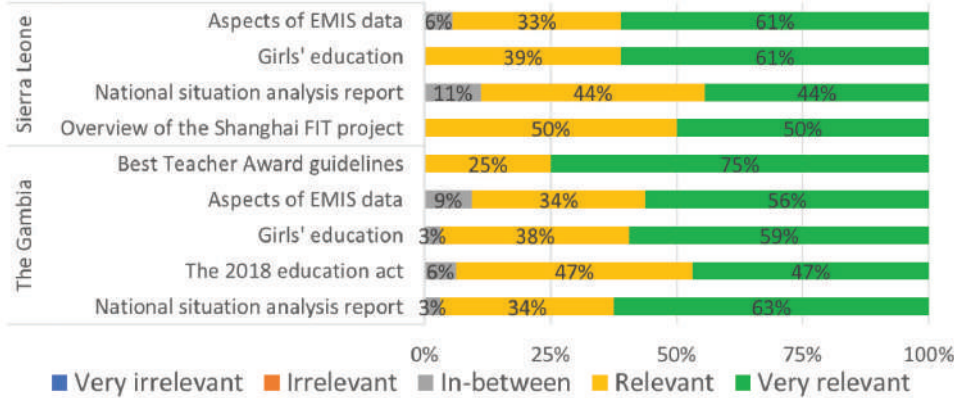
Figure 10: Selected Performance Measures for the Project on Preventing Violent Extremism



Box 16: Beneficiary Surveys and Assessments for Capacity Enhancement Activities

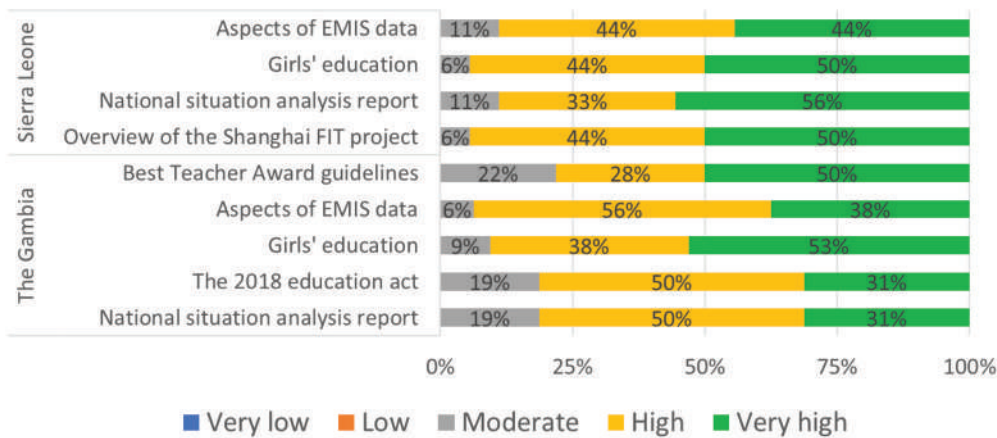
For many of its activities, IICBA conducts beneficiary surveys or assessments to measure the satisfaction of participants. The assessments typically suggest that the material covered in trainings is relevant and that presentations are of high quality. For example, responses from participants to workshops on the professionalization of teaching in Sierra Leone and The Gambia are provided below (Figures 11 and 12). Presentations were made by IICBA staff and Ministry officials. The results were similar for both workshops, suggesting relatively high levels of satisfaction with nevertheless room for improvement. Some trainings and workshops have higher satisfaction rates, but lower satisfaction rates are rare.

Figure 11: How relevant are the topics covered in the workshop in professionalization of teaching in your country?



Participants found the topics covered in the workshops relevant

Figure 12: Please rate the quality of presentations and discussions for the topics covered in the workshop



Participants rated the quality of presentations and discussions as high

As IICBA's work program grows in 2024, the Institute will aim to monitor and assess the impact of its capacity enhancement activities, including when feasible with baseline and endline data collection for pilot projects. This emphasis on measurement is at the core of IICBA's new strategic plan, with research and knowledge informing policy dialogue and the selection of capacity enhancement activities.

Conclusion

As stated in November 2023 by IICBA's Governing Board in its bi-annual report to the UNESCO General Conference, *"substantial progress has been achieved by IICBA over the period in review. This includes the adoption of a new strategic plan, implementation of a wider range of projects, gains in resource mobilization, the launch of the Executive Education and Policy Academy, the creation of a new website and better communications, work on a new eLearning platform, and an expanding array of partnerships. As a result, ahead of the African Union's Year of Education in 2024, IICBA is better positioned to fulfill its mission, thereby 'empowering teachers for all learners to thrive.'"*

As IICBA celebrates its 25th anniversary, its strong pipeline of externally funded projects and its growing partnerships will enable it to make a larger difference on the ground, not only for teachers and school leaders, but also ultimately for learners. The African Union's Year of Education offers unique opportunities for IICBA to share its expertise and help countries strengthen their education systems. IICBA's team is very grateful to all those who have supported the Institute for the past 25 years. Together, we can strengthen teaching and learning in Africa for the continent to reach its full potential.



Photo Credit: UNESCO IICBA



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