

IICBA Executive Education and Policy Academy

Improving Girls' Education and Ending Child Marriage: Benefits, Programs, and Policies



In partnership with



African Union International
Center for Girls & Women's
Education in Africa

About IICBA

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's strategic plan for 2023-25 is built around three main lines of action: (i) Research and knowledge; (ii) Policy dialogue and advocacy; and (iii) Capacity enhancement.

About the Executive Education and Policy Academy

Education systems in Africa are in crisis. Learning poverty, defined as the inability for 10-year-old children to read and understand an age-appropriate text, affects nine out of ten children in sub-Saharan Africa. Teachers are key to improve educational outcomes, but many lack the training they need to ensure that children learn. Beyond the current learning crisis, education systems face a range of medium- and long-term challenges, including changing labor markets that require individuals to acquire new skills, climate change, and conflicts. Education systems have a fundamental role to play for sustainable development, but often fall short. IICBA's aim is to empower teachers for all learners to thrive. Through a range of courses of various lengths, the Executive Education and Policy 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 in Africa.

About this Course

Low educational attainment for girls and child marriage both remain major issues in Africa. This course has two objectives. The first is to share with participants new analysis of how improving education for girls and ending child marriage could have large benefits for the girls themselves as well as for their children and communities, and for society at large. The second objective is to explore strategies for improving outcomes for adolescent girls, and in particular the role that can be played by teachers from pre-primary and primary schools onwards. The course will include a session on preventing girls (and boys) from dropping out of school, and another on particular interventions, such as gender-responsive pedagogy and the role of female teachers as mentors. Participants will have the option of proposing a research project related to approaches to improve educational and other outcomes for girls in their country.



Learning Journey

The course consists of three sessions on June 21, 2023, and an optional component to be completed over the next four months. Participants completing the three sessions and the optional component will receive a certificate of course completion and may be eligible to present their work at the KIX (Knowledge and Innovation eXchange) Symposium that will be held in Dakar, Senegal, on October 3-5.

Session 1: Benefits from educating girls and ending child marriage. The first session of the course will focus on the positive effects of improving girls' education and ending child marriage in multiple domains, including labor market earnings, the demographic transition, health, women's agency, etc. Estimations of the effect of universal secondary education (which could drastically reduce child marriage and early pregnancies) will be provided based on analysis of data among others from Demographic and Health Surveys. Some of the economic benefits associated with those various benefits will be discussed.

Session 1:
Benefits from educating girls and ending child marriage

Session 2: Preventing girls (and boys) from dropping out of school. Multiple factors may lead girls to drop out of school. The second session will be devoted to an analysis of these factors based in part on parental perceptions of the reasons leading girls (and boys) to drop out of school. The analysis will show that improving learning is essential to reduce drop-out especially at the primary level, even if other factors such as social norms and the cost of schooling matter as well. Approaches to improve learning in schools will be discussed based on a review of the literature and analysis of multi-country student assessments.

Session 2:
Preventing girls (and boys) from dropping out of school

Session 3: Interventions, including gender-responsive pedagogy, female teachers, and the AU CIEFFA Compendium on legal instruments. The third session will discuss in more details particular interventions that could help improve girls' education and thereby reduce child marriage and early childbearing. This will include gender-responsive pedagogy in schools and the role that female teachers could play not only in improving student learning, but also in serving as role models for adolescent girls to pursue their education at the secondary level. The section will also present key findings from the Compendium of Regional and International Legal Instruments on Girls & Women's Education produced by the African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA).

Session 3:
Interventions, including gender-responsive pedagogy and female teachers

Optional Component: Individual Research Project. Participants will have the option of proposing a research project related to improving educational and other outcomes for girls in their country. Projects will need to be implemented between June and September 2023. Participants will benefit from mentoring from IICBA's staff to conduct their research and will have the opportunity to apply for presentation of their work at the KIX (Knowledge and Innovation eXchange) Symposium to be held in Dakar in October 2023. Depending on the number of projects proposed by participants and their complexity, a selection of the projects that would benefit from mentoring by IICBA staff may need to be conducted.

Optional Component:
Individual Research Project

Course Coordinators

Dr. Quentin Wodon



Quentin Wodon is Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa. Previously, he worked at the World Bank, including as Lead Economist, Lead Poverty Specialist, and manager of the unit on values and development. Before that, he taught with tenure at the University of Namur. He has also taught at Addis Ababa University, American University, and Georgetown University. A business engineering graduate, after an assignment in Asia as Laureate of a Prize, he worked in brand management for Procter & Gamble. He then shifted career to join a nonprofit working with the extreme poor. This led him to pursue a career in international development. Quentin holds four PhDs, has over 700 publications, and has worked on policy issues in more than 60 countries. He has held multiple leadership positions with nonprofits. His research has been covered by leading news media globally.

Simone Yankey



Mrs. Simone Yankey is currently the Ag. Coordinator of the African Union/International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (African Union CIEFFA). She is also the Senior Policy Officer at the African Union CIEFFA in charge of various portfolios. Prior to this position, she was a Senior Program Officer at the former Department of Women, Gender, and Development Directorate, currently known as the Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate at the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She holds a D.E.S.S (Post Master's Degree) in Human Rights from the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, and a Master's Degree in Governance & Development from the Institute of Policy & Development Management (IOB), University of Antwerp, Belgium. She is certified in a number of trainings (e.g., gender-responsive policy and programme formulation, negotiation skills and preventive diplomacy, results-based management, gender and women's leadership, technical writing, public speaking, gender-sensitive education sector planning, management strategy). She has been a social worker in a non-profit organization in Belgium and at a national level, she served as a legal advisor on Arts, Culture, and Human Rights in Ivory Coast. Her vision is to see "An Africa in which girls and women are socially, economically and politically empowered through quality education throughout their lives".

Lorato Palesa Modongo



Lorato Modongo is a Psychologist working on, and with interests on the intersections of Social Psychology Research, Education, Social and Human Development, Policy, and Gender Justice in Africa. She is currently the Gender Data and Research Officer at the African Union - International Center for Girls & Women's Education in Africa (AU CIEFFA) based in Burkina Faso. She has previously lectured Research Methodology in Public Health at the Institute of Development Management (Botswana) and worked at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Botswana, in the Gender Unit. Ms. Modongo holds an MA Psychology, BA (Hons) Psychology both from Stellenbosch University, South Africa, and a BA Social Sciences (Psychology and Accounting) from the University of Botswana. She further holds a Certificate in Civic Society Law from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.