

IICBA Executive Education and Policy Academy

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Training in Malawi

In partnership with



UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa



Republic of Malawi
Ministry of Education



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

Since 2020, IICBA has been partnering with the Regional Office for Southern Africa to build resilience and strengthen psychosocial support for Teachers and Teacher Educators in selected Sub-Saharan African countries. The project is anchored within the framing of UNESCO's Africa programme which focuses on "Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future" (O3). It has supported (i) an assessment of the psychosocial impacts on teachers of the COVID-19 pandemic; (ii) the development of a contextualized sub-regional strategy on strengthening mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for teachers in Africa; (iii) the development of an evidence-based psychosocial support manual, school-based training manual and tools for teachers and teacher educators, and pilot training for teachers, educators, and education experts in four countries i.e. Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, and Malawi; and (iv) a master trainer training conducted for Ethiopia, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda; and will develop (v) a self-paced e-learning course for teachers. The national training workshop is intended to enhance the capacity of national trainers with advanced facilitation skills, behaviours, and techniques needed for the rolling out of the MHPSS guide amongst education officers, educators, and teachers. This national master trainers' workshop will bring together representatives from the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST), the Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED), and teachers from colleges and secondary schools. UNESCO IICBA organized the training in collaboration with the MoEST, the Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, and the UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office for Eastern Africa.

Learning Journey

This is a five-day face-to-face workshop from June 26 to 30, 2023 aims at strengthening MHPSS for teachers and teacher educators in Malawi for resilience building, risk mitigation, and institutionalisation of preventative and support systems on MHPSS in the education sector. The training is facilitated by expert trainers and master trainers who took the training in May 2023.

Day one: Theoretical Basis, Models, and Principles of MHPSS: The first day of the training focuses on the theoretical background, principles, and models of MHPSS and its responsiveness to the context of teachers in Africa. The day's session includes identifying the psychosocial needs of teachers and how the existing models address the needs respective to the country's context; ascertaining the consequences of emergencies on the well-being of teachers; recognizing, understanding, and responding to the psychosocial problems and reactions of teachers. Each session uses different approaches including presentation, role play, group work, mind mapping, and case studies.

Day One:
Theoretical Basis,
Models, and Princi-
ples of MHPSS

Day Two: Advanced Psychosocial Support and Counselling Skills: The second-day session focuses on coping mechanisms, management, psychological first aid (PFA), advanced psychosocial support, and counselling skills for teachers. The sessions utilise participatory approaches, including group brainstorming, demonstration, self-reflection, case studies, and role plays. These activities cover various counselling techniques such as abdominal breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, grounding, creation of a safe place, active listening, questioning, and probing skills.

Day Two:
Advanced Psycho-
social Support and
Counselling Skills

Day Three: Techniques to Support Teachers with Anxiety and Depression: On the third day, the focus shifts to more practical approaches in addressing the advanced psychosocial and counseling needs of teachers during times of anxiety and depression. The sessions utilise demonstration, individual exercise, visualization, and self-reflection techniques. The day consists of six sessions, two of which are extensions from day two and cover how to demonstrate paraphrasing skills and reflection of feeling skills. The remaining four sessions are as follows: (1) coping technique for managing anxiety, (2) activating own behaviours to relieve tension, anxiety, and depression, (3) reframing thoughts for recovery, facing fears and worries, and (4) reprocessing traumatic memories to avoid re-victimization.

Day Three:
Techniques to
Support Teachers
with Anxiety and
Depression

Day Four: Mapping Social Capital and Integrating MHPSS in the Education System: On day four, the main focus is on mapping the existing social capital and community resources for MHPSS, as well as identifying approaches and planning for the mainstreaming of PSS in the education system. The day also covers topics such as utilising resources to support teachers, working with parents and communities, and engaging the education workforce.

Day Four:
Mapping Social Ca-
pital and Integrating
MHPSS in the Educati-
on System:

Day Five: Training session preparation and demonstration: The final day focuses on the following areas: (1) Microteaching and skills demonstration, (2) Creating networks and referral systems for MHPSS, (3) Identification of entry points for scaling up the use of the guide at the national level, and (4) Action planning and workshop evaluation.

Day Five:
Training session
preparation and
demonstration

Course Coordinators

Dr. Patricia Machawira



Patricia Machawira is Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Advisor on Education for Health and Wellbeing. Patricia has extensive experience working and providing technical expertise for policy and programme development for the health and education sectors, including on school health, HIV and AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence and comprehensive sexuality education. In recent years, her work has focused on supporting the scale up of comprehensive sexuality education in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region. She currently works as UNESCO's Regional Advisor on Education for Health and Wellbeing for ESA and where she has been the lead person on the ESA Ministerial Commitment Process, which secured political commitment to scaling up sexual and reproductive health education and services for young people in ESA. She holds a doctorate in Education Policy from the University of Pretoria, South Africa and an MSc degree in Education and Training Systems Design from the University of Twente in the Netherlands. To date, she has published, co-authored or led the coordination of over 20 publications on various subject areas including education policy, curriculum design, HIV and AIDS, CSE and SRH.

Dr. Victoria Kisaakye Kanobe



Victoria is a Senior Program Specialist in Education at UNESCO IICBA. She has 26 years of experience supporting Member States and Regional Economic Bodies (such as AUC, EAC, IGAD & SADC) in Africa. Her technical areas include curricula/instruction design for formal and non-formal education; pre-service & in-service teacher education, use of ICTs in education, designing of quality assurance programs, education for health and wellbeing, education in emergencies, and inclusive education. Victoria holds a PhD in Education, a Med, and a BS in chemistry from Makerere University, Uganda, and a MSc. in Public Health from Jomo Kenyatta University, Kenya. She is a member of several education associations, the UNAIDS interagency task team on education, and the Global technical team for balanced and inclusive education at the Education Relief Foundation in Geneva.

Kasumi Moritani



Kasumi is a UN Volunteer at UNESCO IICBA, where she specializes in Peace Education. She started her career as a language teacher, whereafter she transitioned into coordinating educational programmes in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Her experience in MHPSS includes working at Save the Children's community centres in a Syrian refugee camp, where she assisted in "Healing and Education through the Arts (HEART)" programme engaging mothers and adolescent girls. Before joining IICBA, she served as a programme officer at a Japanese local government organization and coordinated 30+ short training for foreign officials, partnering with JICA. She holds master's degrees in Peace Education and Transdisciplinary Social Development.