

# Regional Consultation on a Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) Strategy for Teachers in Africa

May 8, 2024 In-person: Mulungushi International Conference Centre, Lusaka, Zambia

Online: Register at [https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_siFId4B5ScKJOf7C7iDyuQ](https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_siFId4B5ScKJOf7C7iDyuQ)

*“Mental health is more than the absence of mental health conditions. Rather, mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, to realize their abilities, to learn well and work well, and to contribute to their communities”*

(WHO, 2022)



From  
the People of Japan



## Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support for Teachers

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the future through education. However, their mental health and well-being are often overlooked, leading to negative consequences for both teachers and students. The upcoming consultation on the draft African Union strategy on “Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support for Teachers,” aims to address the unique challenges faced by teachers in Africa and provide a holistic approach to promoting mental well-being. With the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating existing mental health issues, it is imperative that all key stakeholders come together to support teachers in prioritizing their mental health. By improving the mental health of teachers, we can create a positive ripple effect on student welfare, learning experiences, and educational achievements.

Join us in this collaborative effort to provide teachers with the necessary tools and support to thrive in their profession and ultimately enhance the quality of education for all.

## About the AU Strategy on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) For Teachers in Africa

### Background

The African Union’s Regional Strategy on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for Teachers in Africa represents a significant collaborative effort to address the well-being of educators across the continent. Developed by the AUC Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation, with support from UNESCO-IICBA, this strategy is the result of a comprehensive process involving a wide array of stakeholders, including experts, Ministries of Education, teachers, unions, training institutions, and international organizations. The strategy aims to integrate MHPSS into the broader framework of teacher support, recognizing the critical role teachers play in shaping the future of education and the need for their mental health and psychosocial well-being. It underscores the importance of building resilient educational systems, particularly in the face of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has highlighted the necessity for robust support mechanisms for educators. The strategy is a testament to the commitment of the African Union and its partners to empower teachers and ensure that they can continue to provide quality education while also taking care of their mental health needs.

### Purpose

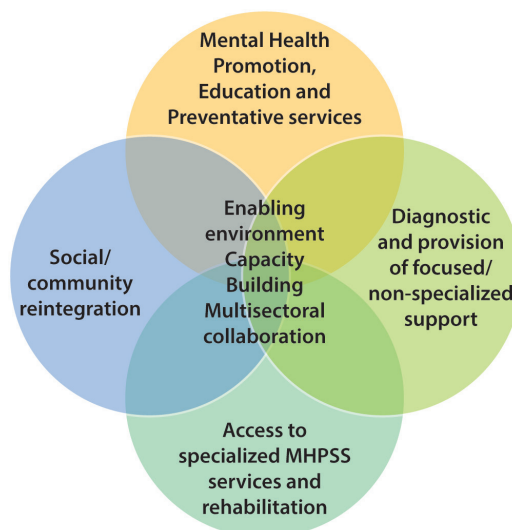
The purpose of the strategy is to provide a systematic and harmonized approach to improving the mental health and

psychosocial wellbeing of teachers and teacher educators in Africa. It offers a comprehensive and coordinated framework for MHPSS interventions in the education sector. The strategy has six objectives: 1) to build the capacity of the education system to deliver MHPSS services; 2) to integrate MHPSS into education policies, curricula, guidelines, and programs; 3) to equip teachers and teacher educators with MHPSS knowledge and skills, including peer training; 4) to establish and strengthen multisectoral collaboration and coordination across sectors for MHPSS; 5) to monitor and evaluate MHPSS interventions and use data for improvement and learning; and 6) to engage parents, community leaders, and local organizations to support and provide MHPSS services for teachers and teacher educators. The strategy also aims to increase mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and advocate for more funding and policy support for MHPSS services for teachers and teacher educators.

### Pillars

The strategic interventions of the regional strategy are arranged into four pillars and three cross cutting priorities (Figure 1). These are: preventive services, diagnostic and provision of focused, non-specialized support, access to specialized services and rehabilitation and social/community reintegration. The three cross cutting interventions are: enabling environment, capacity building of institutions and stakeholders, and multisectoral collaboration. These strategic interventions were systematically identified based on the evidence on what works to address mental health and psychosocial wellbeing in the education sector. The strategy also identifies the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, such as the AU, Member States, Regional Economic Communities, development partners, civil society organizations, teacher unions, employers, and the health sector for a comprehensive approach to addressing the MHPSS needs of teachers in Africa.

**Figure 1:** The Four Pillars of the MHPSS strategy for Teachers in Africa



## Consultation at the AFTRA Annual Conference

The African Union Commission's Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (ESTI), in partnership with the Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities (AFTRA) and UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), is hosting a Regional Consultation on a draft Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) Strategy for Teachers in Africa. The strategy was crafted by the Continental Education Strategy (CESA 16-25) Teacher Development Cluster. The strategy acknowledges the significant mental health challenges that teachers face, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It outlines a set of comprehensive strategies and approaches aimed at safeguarding teachers' wellbeing, which is essential for maintaining a resilient education system.

The goal of the consultation is for the MHPSS strategy to be reviewed by AU Member States and other stakeholders and validated for adoption as an Africa Union document. Specific Objectives include the following: 1) To provide feedback on the relevance and the value addition of the strategy to AU (CESA 16-25 aspirations for the development of education in Africa and specifically, the first strategic objective of the CESA 2016-2025 on "Revitalize the teaching profession"; 2) To improve on the quality of the strategy through participatory assessment and feedback on the extent to which the realities at country level are adequately reflected; 3) To initiate networking among educators, policymakers, mental health experts, and teacher associations to share experiences and build consensus on how MHPSS can be mainstreamed in the educator sector across Africa; and 4) To develop a road map towards the approval, launch, and implementation of the strategy. The consultation should lead to an agreed roadmap for finalization and implementation of the strategy.

The consultation event is expected to bring together representatives of the Ministries of Education, Teachers, Teachers' Unions, Teacher Training Institutions, Employers of teachers, AU Commission, Regional Economic Communities, CESA (16-25) Cluster Coordinators, Academics, Civil Society Organizations, International Organizations and UN agencies who have directly or indirectly contributed or are well placed to influence the implementation of the strategy. It will be hybrid, combining in-person and online participation. There will be power point presentations, plenary discussions, group discussions and several informal and interactive engagements.

## Outline

### Opening Remarks:

- Mrs. Sophia Ashipala, Head of Education Division, African Union Commission
- Dr. Steve Nwokeocha, Executive Director, AFTRA
- Dr. Quentin Wodon, Director, UNESCO IICBA

### Contextual Issues and Rationale:

- o Linkages between the AUC Education for Health and Wellbeing Strategy for young people and the MHPSS strategy: the role of teachers (Dr. Patricia Machawira, UNESCO Regional Advisor)
- o Why mental health and psychosocial support for teachers in Africa? (Dr. Victoria Kisaakye, UNESCO IICBA Senior Programme Coordinator)

### MHPSS Draft Strategy Review and Feedback:

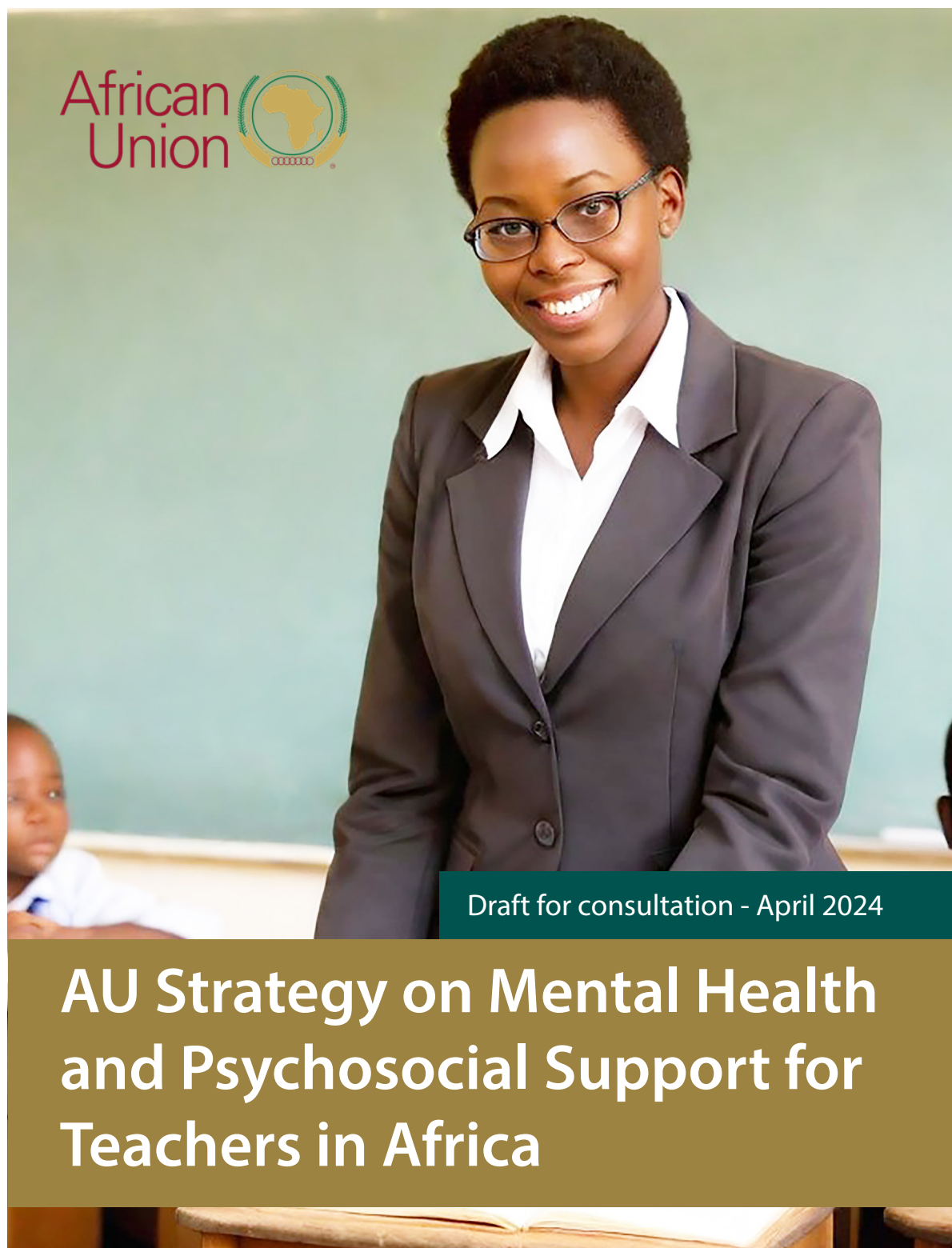
- o Document Presentation: goals, strategic interventions, principles, roles and responsibilities and intended outcomes (Mr. Lucas Halimani, UNESCO IICBA Project Officer)
- o Illustrative Case Studies, including REC and Country Experiences (List to be confirmed)
- o Q&A Session: Participants to ask clarifying questions about the presentation (Moderator, Education International).
- o Discussion on the content of the strategy document.
  1. Are the objectives clear and relevant?
  2. Are the proposed interventions feasible and practical?
  3. Are there any gaps or areas that need further development?
- o Plenary Discussion

## Roadmap Development

- o Summarize the main points from the validation discussion.
- o Discuss the timeline for finalizing the strategy document, launch and implementation.
- o Closing Remarks by Mrs Sophia Ashipala, Head of Education Division, African Union Commission



To download the draft African Union strategy on mental health and psycho-social support for teachers, please go to the mental health webpage of the UNESCO IICBA website: <https://www.iicba.unesco.org/en/node/144>. You will also find other useful resources on that webpage.



**CONTACTS:**

For further information about the consultation and the draft strategy, please contact:

Mr Lucas Halimani, Project Officer, UNESCO-IICBA, Email: [l.halimani@unesco.org](mailto:l.halimani@unesco.org)

Mrs. Sophia Ndemutla Ashipala, Head of Education Division, African Union, Email: [AshipalaS@africa-union.org](mailto:AshipalaS@africa-union.org)