Counselling in the African Context - Experiences from Malawi

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MALAWI
Population estimated 18,008,081 in Jan 2017
152.0 people per square kilometer
Counselling in Africa...

• Traditional Counselling is based on the African concept of unity: “Umunthu”
  \[ \text{I am because you are, You are because I am, therefore we are.} \]

• **Positive:** sense of belonging to one’s family, harmony, unity, support, care for one another…. loyalty to traditional values, beliefs, and customs…

• **Negative:** need to please family/community, dependency, individuation problems, emotional conflict, fear, repressed anger, passivity… relational difficulties….

• **Consequences:** Traditionally Counselling in African Context is mainly
  \[ \text{Advice giving... for the sake of community living...} \]
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Counselling in MALAWI... Historical/Social background

• With this African vision, Malawi has lived 30 years under the one party authoritarian government... with fear, submission, passivity.... peaceful living...

• 1994, political changes (multiparty), social transformation....

• Desire for freedom... for better conditions of life....

• Consequences: pandemic of HIV... corruption... rich richer, poor poorer...

• Despite huge foreign financial assistance... Infrastructure being depleted... hospitals without medication... quality of education disappeared...

• Increase in crime, substance abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancies, abortions, mental illnesses.... poverty in all forms...
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Counselling in MALAWI....

• Counselling came in with the pandemic of HIV....
• By 1985, Ministry of Health put in place HIV Testing and Counselling, called HTC...
• HTC sites opened in most of Health facilities..
• HTC Counsellors were/are trained in 3, 4 or 5 weeks....
• Most people have been and are tested... compulsory for pregnant women... to save unborn baby...
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Counselling in MALAWI....

• Malawi's HIV prevalence is one of the highest in the world, with **10.6%** of the adult population (aged 15-64) living with HIV. (up 1,100,000 person...)

• Near to 90,000 children live with HIV.....

• More than 500,000 AIDS orphans...

• *Malawi Youth* form the majority of the population (more than 60%), but they are largely invisible ...

• Most people are being either infected or affected by HIV and the psychosocial emotional issues surrounding this reality...
Malawi Association of Counsellors (MAC)

- Against this background, MAC was formed in 1999, with emphasis on HIV and AIDS counselling
- Then, services were poorly coordinated, many counsellors were providing counselling services in isolation
- Counselling issues were emerging and needing urgent attention: suicidal attempts, divorce, domestic violence, rape, drug and alcohol abuse, juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancies and abortions common both in urban and rural Malawi...
- Psychosocial issues are still on the increase and professional counselling services are much needed to assist people.
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MAC Development

• In February 2002, MAC was registered as “The Registered Trustees of Malawi Association of Counsellors”.

• From 2002 up to 2014, MAC remain dormant mainly due to lack of financial support...

• However, Counselling training started to be offered in some institutions at different academic and professional levels...

• In 2014, due to the situation of Counselling training in Malawi, some professional counsellors came together, decided to revive MAC so to deal with the challenges that professional counselling is facing
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Main Challenges faced by Professional Counselling in Malawi
1) No official recognition of Counselling as a profession
2) No registration, certification or licencing of Counsellors
3) No standardisation of professional counselling training
4) No published Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Malawi
5) Quality counselling services is compromised putting clients at risks
6) Lack of networking among institutions offering counselling training and services
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MAC Achievements 2015-2017

• Developing MAC website ([www.malawiac.org](http://www.malawiac.org))
• Establishing MAC Board of Trustees
• Registering with CONGOMA (Committee for NGOs in Malawi) in 2016
• Holding 2 MAC National Counselling Conferences (2015/2016) and getting ready for a 3rd one in June 10th, 2017
• Working with the Government Ministry of Social Welfare in the lobbying process for the official recognition of Counselling as a profession
• Opening of MAC secretariat, Lilongwe area 47/2/50, February 2017
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MAC Achievements 2015-2017 (cont.)

• Becoming a member of IAC (2017)
• Opening Registration of MAC Membership
• Started MAC Newsletter
• Offering individual and group counselling sessions
• Offering counseling supervision and sessions for CPD
• Offering a Certificate in Psychosocial Counselling Training
• Networking with other institutions....
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**Way forward**

- MAC 3\textsuperscript{rd} Conference (June, 2017)
- Publication, printing and dissemination of Code of Ethics and Standard of Practice
- Continue the lobbying process for the recognition of Counselling as a profession in Malawi
- Offering individual and group sessions
- Offering a Certificate in Psychosocial Counselling Training
- Offer counsellors Continuous Personal Development (CPD) and counselling supervision
- Continue networking with other Institutions, Colleges, and Universities
MAC First Conference *(Building MAC)*
MAC 2nd Conference (Counselling for healing, growth and emotional wellbeing)
Vote of thanks