

Counselling in the African Context - Experiences from Malawi



Malawi Association of Counsellors
FACILITATING EMOTIONAL GROWTH

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MALAWI

Population
estimated
18,008,081
in Jan 2017

152.0
people
*per square
kilometer*



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Counselling in Africa...

- Traditional Counselling is based on the African concept of unity: “***Umunthu***”
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
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...

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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)
- 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 3rd 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)*



MAC Secretariat 47/2/50



Vote of thanks

