

Promoting Child and Adolescent Mental Wellbeing in Sub-Saharan Africa: A School-Based Mindfulness Intervention

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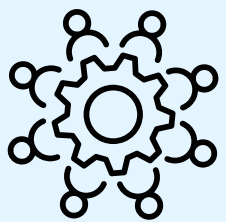
BACKGROUND



1 in 7 affected SSA



Poor school performance, risky behaviors, lifelong impacts



Few culturally adapted interventions, limited awareness

AIM



Design, implement, and evaluate a culturally acceptable, cost-effective school-based mindfulness intervention.

OBJECTIVES



- 1) Build networks with policy actors, communities, schools
- 2) Map existing policies & assess effectiveness
- 3) Co-design intervention with teachers & students
- 4) Evaluate effectiveness, cultural acceptability, cost-effectiveness
- 5) Strengthen African-led research capacity

The project's funder is the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR Global Health Research Programme is funded through UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) via the Department of Health and Social Care



Project website

METHODS



Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) & Rwanda



Aug 2022 – Aug 2026



Critical realist approach, mixed-methods, quasi-experimental trial



1 feasibility, 1 intervention, 1 control

PHASES

Phase 1 (2022–2024) → Pre-intervention (policy review, stakeholder workshops, feasibility school).

Phase 2 (2024–2026) → Intervention (trial vs. control schools, mixed-methods, surveys + FGD)

Phase 3 (2026 onward) → Post-intervention (dissemination, scale-up).

WORK PACKAGES

Work package 1 Context, situational analysis, community and policy actors engagement

Work package 2 Context specific intervention design, design and delivery

Work package 3 Applied health research

Work package 4 Education and Training

Work package 5 Dissemination, Advocacy and Sustainability

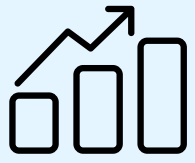
Work package 6 Management

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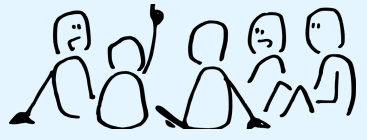


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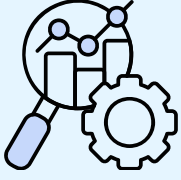
ANALYSIS



Quantitative (Compare outcome changes at 12 months.,



Qualitative (cultural acceptability, perspectives)



Mixed-methods integration

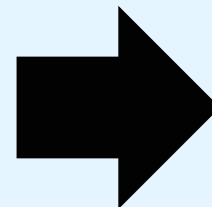


Health economic analysis (QALYs, time, manual production, out-of-pocket costs,)

IMPACT

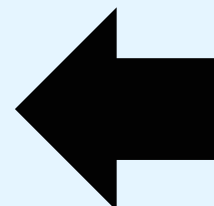
MAIN GRANT OBJECTIVE

to demonstrate that a whole school MP intervention that is cost effective and scalable can promote the wellbeing of CA



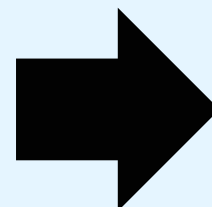
GRANT OUTCOME

Evidence that a cost-effective whole school intervention promotes the mental wellbeing of CA. A validated training program for teachers, a manual for delivery, and 420 teachers trained to deliver the intervention. At least 22,000 CA benefited from the intervention



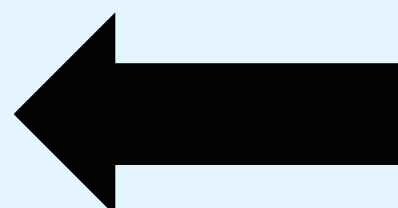
LONGER TERM (4-8 YEARS)

Whole school mental wellbeing intervention tested at scale and adopted into policy



IMPACT

A reduction in poverty achieved through the strengthening of population health, improved educational outcomes, an increase in productive employment, gender equality, and the empowerment of women, and a narrowing of inequalities



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RESULTS

PEA findings



Power imbalances, weak coordination, limited funding



Structural/institutional gaps restrict mental health-sensitive service delivery



Need for preventive strategies & stronger collaboration

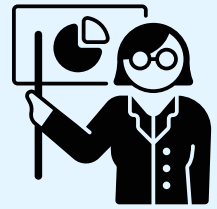


Scan the QR-code to access the full paper

Qualitative Findings (Preliminary)



Improved calmness, focus, behavior, and academic performance



Calmer classrooms, less corporal punishment, better emotional regulation

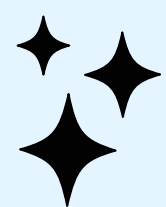


Limited awareness of intervention among parents



Repetitive exercises, low home practice, weaker engagement from older students & boys

Conclusion



Feasibility & Acceptability

Initial evidence shows the mindfulness program is feasible and well-received in Ethiopian primary schools.



Impact Potential

Promising improvements in wellbeing and classroom dynamics.



Added Value

Strengthening capacity, building partnerships, and generating data.



Next Steps

Complete evaluation, deepen contextual understanding, and support sustainable scale-up with policymakers and educators.

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