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EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear Students and Colleagues,

Welcome to this edition of the Unicaf Research Newsletter, highlighting recent milestones and achievements across the Unicaf network.

The 2nd International Conference on Sustainable Education 2025, hosted by INTI International University, Malaysia and co-organised by Unicaf University, was a major success. Scholars from 25 countries participated, and Unicaf showcased its strong global presence with 15 paper and 5 poster presentations. Congratulations to Dr Christine Mushibwe and coauthors Dr Pelekelo Kabundula and Dr Daniel L. Mpolomoka for winning the Silver Medal for Best Poster Presentation on Transnational Education in Zambia, and to Mr Jason Pipe for earning Best Paper Presenter - Online Category for his innovative study on language learning.

At the international level, Dr Anastasia Datsogianni (Unicaf Cyprus) participated in the EARLI 2025 Conference in Graz, Austria, titled "Realising Potentials through Education: Shaping the Minds and **Brains for the Future.**"

Dr Reginald Dennis Gwisai, PVC Academic at Unicaf Cyprus, represented Unicaf at the SACA International Conference in Johannesburg, presenting research on sustainable burial innovations.

Regionally, Unicaf University Zambia co-hosted the 1st SARUA Conference in Lusaka on "Innovating Higher Education for Sustainable Development across the SADC: Innovation for Impact," while Mrs Namukanga, lecturer and PhD student, represented the University at the Mid-Term Review Workshop of Zambia's Community Health Strategy (2023–2026) and received the prestigious Mawazo Fellowship.

Further strengthening health research engagement, Unicaf University Zambia hosted a symposium on 4th September 2025 to mark the graduation of four staff as certified Dementia Care Coaches (DCCs) under the FITS Programme in partnership with the University of Huddersfield. The event brought together healthcare leaders, partners, and university management to discuss the outcomes of the six-month programme.

In Malawi, the Research Lab Series concluded three sessions between April and June 2025, focusing on designing research, conducting studies, and navigating the publication process. Facilitated by Dr Manda, Dr Mondiwa, and Dr Wilfred Masebo, the series strengthened research capacity across academic levels.

In our Student's Hub, Dr Yiota Apostolou-Christou provides an insightful article titled "The Role of Health and Sciences in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." This edition also includes reflections from Dr Jane Bethuel Peter and Dr Emily Grace Chiumia Mwale on research impact.

Finally, this edition includes updates on publications, funding opportunities, and upcoming conferences to support your continued engagement.

Thank you for your dedication to research excellence.

Kind regards,

Dr Elena Papadopoulou

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning Principal Editor, Unicaf Online Journal & Unicaf Research Newsletter

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS - 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON **SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION (ICSE) 2025**

The 2nd International Conference on Sustainable Education 2025, hosted by INTI International University, Malaysia (September 24th) and proudly co-organised by Unicaf University, was a resounding success. This global event brought together scholars, practitioners, and educators from around the world to share cutting-edge research and insights into the future of sustainable education.

Event in Numbers:

• Co-organisers: 10 institutions

• Keynote Speakers: 3

• Panelists: 6

Online Paper Presentations: 202 (from 21 countries)

Poster Presentations: 24

• Online Attendees: 500+ (from 25 countries)

• On-site Paper Presenters & Speakers: 57

Inbound Visiting Scholars: 24 (from 15 countries)

• On-site Co-organiser Representatives: 8

Awards & Recognition:

- Best Online Presenter Awards: 13
- Best On-site Presenter Awards: 5
- Best e-Poster Presentation Awards: 4
- Certificates of appreciation presented to co-organisers and focal persons.

Unicaf's Strong Participation:

Unical demonstrated a significant presence in the academic programme with:

- 15 paper presentations
- 5 poster presentations

Including contributions from Unicaf Federal (2), Unicaf University, Malawi (1), and Unicaf University, Zambia (17).

Recognition of UUZM Contribution:

We are especially proud of Dr Christine Mushibwe (Vice-Chancellor, Unicaf University, Zambia) with co-authors Dr Pelekelo Kabundula (Lecturer in Education, School of Doctoral Studies) and Dr Daniel L. Mpolomoka (DVC Academic Affairs), who won the Silver Medal for Best Poster Presentation for their study "Challenges and Opportunities of Transnational Education in Zambia: A Management and Leadership Perspective."

Individual Achievement - Jason Pipe:

Special congratulations to Mr. J. Pipe, doctoral student in Education at Unicaf University, Zambia and lecturer at Kanto Gakuin University, Japan. He was awarded the **Best Paper Presenter - Online Category** for his presentation "Timed-Pair-Practice: The Framework to Engage Students to Encourage Greater L2 Fluency." His study showcased an innovative classroom method that significantly improved Japanese university students' English fluency through structured, repeated dialogues.

This recognition underscores the **depth and impact of Unicaf's research** across our institutions. As a co-organiser, Unicaf is honoured to have contributed meaningfully to this global platform, showcasing the dedication and resilience of our scholars despite funding challenges.

Website: https://inticonferences.newinti.edu.my/conferences/icse-2025

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT UNICAF FEDERAL





Dr Anastasia Datsogianni, Associate Dean of the School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences at Unicaf (Cyprus), participated in the EARLI 2025 Conference, organised by the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI). The event, titled "Realising Potentials" through Education: Shaping the Minds and Brains for the Future", was held in Graz, Austria, from 23rd - 24th August 2025 (https://www.earli.org/events/ earli2025).

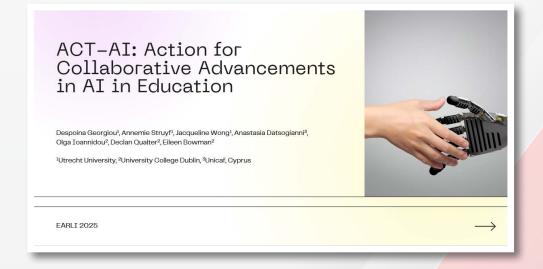
The conference explored education as a transformative force for individual and societal development, emphasising how quality education fosters talent, drives innovation, and equips individuals to address global challenges.

Dr Datsogianni contributed to a roundtable discussion on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education, co-presented with colleagues from University College Dublin (Ireland) and Utrecht University (Netherlands). These exchanges generated promising avenues for collaboration, including plans for joint publications and the development of a joint Erasmus+ proposal in 2026.

In addition to presenting, Dr Datsogianni engaged with sessions on Al-enhanced learning environments, mathematics education, and cross-disciplinary innovations. Key insights included:

- Emerging applications of Al in higher education.
- Integration of AI and learning analytics to provide personalised feedback.
- Ethical and inclusive approaches to Al-enhanced education.
- The importance of cross-institutional collaboration to assess Al's impact in diverse contexts.
- Innovative tools and adaptive systems in mathematics education.

The conference provided an important platform for international scholarly exchange, strengthening of networks, and exploration of future collaborative projects. The knowledge and connections gained will inform ongoing research and practice at Unicaf.



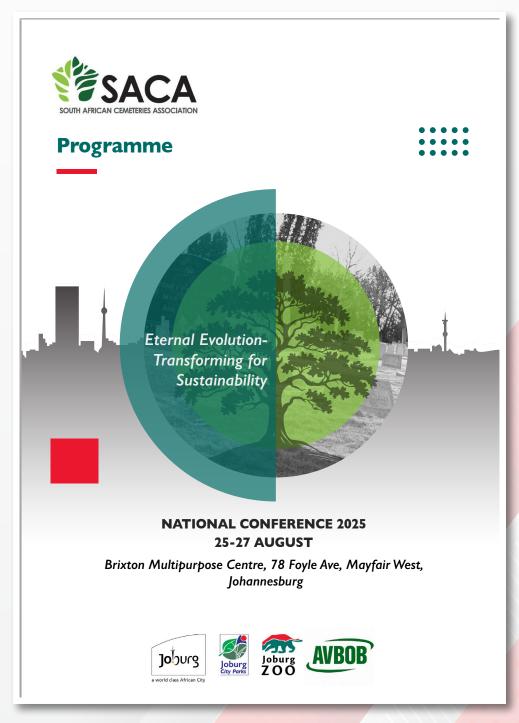
SOUTH AFRICAN CEMETERIES ASSOCIATION (SACA) ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The South African Cemeteries Association (SACA) held its biennial international conference in Johannesburg from 25th - 27th August 2025 under the theme "Eternal Evolution - Transforming for Sustainability." Presenters from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and India examined sustainable approaches to cemetery and memorial management.

Dr Reginald Dennis Gwisai, PVC Academic, Unicaf Cyprus, participated and represented Unicaf. He presented a paper titled "Regulations, Norms and Practices: Exploring Diverse, Suitable and Affordable Burial Innovations in Urban Memorial Spaces, Zimbabwe," which built on previously published research on cremation practices.

Discussions highlighted the challenge of limited burial space across Africa, the need for sustainable and multifunctional memorial spaces, and the importance of policy innovation to address environmental and cultural concerns. The presentation drew interest from municipalities, industry associations, and funeral service providers, opening opportunities for collaboration in municipal training, professional associations,

and future research dissemination.



RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT UNICAF UNIVERSITY IN ZAMBIA

SYMPOSIUM REPORT: GRADUATION OF DEMENTIA CARE COACHES

Unicaf University, Zambia hosted a symposium on 4th September 2025 to mark the graduation of four staff members as certified Dementia Care Coaches (DCCs) under the Focused Intervention Training and Support (FITS) Programme, conducted in partnership with the University of Huddersfield. The event, moderated by Dr Thando Dube (FITS Project Coordinator), brought together healthcare leaders, funding partners, and university management to reflect on the outcomes of the six-month training programme.

The certification process combined an initial face-to-face training session (January 2025), ongoing virtual mentorship, and supervised patient-centered case studies, culminating in graduates presenting their findings on the application of dementia care principles in Zambia.

The following staff members were awarded certification:

- Ms Abigail Nachilima Chalwe (Dean of Student Affairs)
- Ms Elinai Mwasinga (Student Affairs Officer)
- Mr Dennis Mwansa (IT Officer)
- Mr Golden Moonga (Librarian)

Special recognition was also given to Dr Mbono Dube for her sustained contribution to dementia care awareness and training.

Key outcomes of the symposium included:

- Formal certification of four Dementia Care Coaches.
- Commitment by partners and the University to expand dementia care training.
- Affirmation of the importance of psychosocial interventions and individualized care planning in dementia practice.

The event highlighted the role of Unicaf University, Zambia in advancing dementia care capacity building through structured training, research, and cross-sector collaboration. Future directions include scaling up the FITS programme, establishing peer support networks among certified coaches, and strengthening institutional partnerships to sustain momentum in dementia care education and practice.

CO-HOSTING OF THE FIRST SARUA CONFERENCE BY **UNICAF UNIVERSITY, ZAMBIA**



Unical University, Zambia proudly co-hosted the 1st Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) Conference, which took place in Lusaka, Zambia, under the theme: "Innovating Higher Education for Sustainable Development across the SADC: Innovation for Impact." The landmark event was a significant success, addressing key themes relevant to the advancement of higher education in the SADC region and beyond.

The pre-conference workshops were hosted at Unicaf University, Zambia from 19th to 20th May 2025, providing an engaging platform for in-depth discussions and capacity-building.

UNICAF Zambia's participation was marked by its active intellectual contribution to the conference, showcasing scholarly work aligned with regional and global education priorities. The following presentations were delivered by UNICAF faculty:

1."Higher Education Leadership as Agents for Change - An African Perspective"

Presented by Dr Daniel L. Mpolomoka (DVC Academic Affairs) & Dr Christine Mushibwe (Vice-Chancellor), the paper emphasised the transformative role of leadership in shaping the future of African universities through strategic vision and inclusive governance.

2."Interrogating STEM Policies and Practices in Private Universities in Zambia"

Presented by Emily Kamizi (Research Officer) & Dr Daniel L. Mpolomoka (DVC Academic Affairs), this presentation critically analysed the implementation and challenges of STEM education within Zambia's private higher education sector.

3."Leveraging Opportunities and Constraints of Distance E-Education in Selected Higher Learning Institutions in Zambia"

Presented by Abigail Nachilima (Dean of Student Affairs/ Lecturer), Dr Pelekelo P. Kabundula (Lecturer in Education), and Dr Daniel L. Mpolomoka (DVC Academic Affairs), this study highlighted best practices and

technological challenges in e-learning environments across Zambian institutions.

4."Zambia's 8th National Development Plan: Its **Promotion of Higher Education in the Context of the** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)"

Presented by DR Pelekelo P. Kabundula (Lecturer in Education), Abigail C. Nachilima, (Dean of Student Affairs/ Lecturer), Dr Daniel L. Mpolomoka (DVC Academic Affairs), and Liambela Muyunda, the paper examined the alignment of Zambia's national development agenda with global educational sustainability targets.

The SARUA Conference offered an invaluable opportunity for Unicaf Zambia to engage with regional academic peers, contribute to scholarly discourse, and foster strategic collaborations. The event concluded with the signing of new Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) among universities, reinforcing partnerships and shared commitments to digital transformation, sustainable financing, and leadership development in higher education.



UNICAF UNIVERSITY, ZAMBIA PARTICIPATES IN MID-TERM REVIEW WORKSHOP OF ZAMBIA'S COMMUNITY HEALTH STRATEGY

Mrs Namukanga, Public Health Specialist and PhD student, represented Unicaf University, Zambia at the Mid-Term Review Workshop of Zambia's Community Health Strategy (2023-2026) held from 6th-9th May 2025 in Chongwe. Organised by the Ministry of Health, the workshop brought together key stakeholders to review the draft MTR report and provide strategic input for its finalisation. Mrs Namukanga contributed an academic perspective focused on evidence-based implementation and evaluation of community health initiatives. Key discussions emphasised the need for improved data systems, multi-sectoral collaboration, and stronger integration of research into policy and practice. The workshop also highlighted future opportunities for academic institutions like Unicaf University, Zambia to engage in operational research and support the end-line review process, reinforcing the role of academia in advancing community health goals.

MAWAZO FELLOWSHIP ONBOARDING: RECOGNISING ACADEMIC **EXCELLENCE**

Mrs Namukanga, lecturer in the School of Health and Applied Sciences at Unicaf University, Zambia, has been awarded the prestigious Mawazo Fellowship, recognising her outstanding contribution to research and public health. She is currently pursuing her PhD with the University of Zambia, focusing on self-reported primary dysmenorrhea.

From 18th-23rd May 2025, she participated in the 2025 Mawazo Fellowship Programme Kick-Off and Onboarding Training, held in Nairobi, Kenya.

Her selection among leading early-career African women researchers highlights the strength of Unicaf University's faculty and reinforces the institution's commitment to academic excellence.

We congratulate Mrs. Namukanga on this distinguished achievement.



CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP ON IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH

Mrs Namukanga, lecturer in the School of Health and Applied Sciences at Unicaf University, Zambia, represented Unicaf University, Zambia at the Capacity-Building Workshop on Implementation Research, jointly organised by the University of Zambia and the University of Ghana from 9-12 June 2025 in Lusaka. The workshop convened academics, researchers, and policymakers to enhance institutional capacity in implementation science and its application in public health systems. Sessions combined theoretical training with practical exposure, including a field visit to Matero Level 1 Hospital to observe an ongoing sickle cell disease project. Key outcomes included improved understanding of implementation methodologies, strategies for research translation into policy and practice, and the establishment of collaborative networks to advance health systems research in Zambia and beyond.







DATA COLLECTION WORKSHOP AND FIELD VISIT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH ON IMMUNISATION PROJECT

Mrs Namukanga represented Unicaf University, Zambia (UUZM) at the Data Collection Workshop (2-4 July) and Field Visit (14-25 July) for the Implementation Research on Immunisation Project, hosted by the University of Zambia, School of Public Health. The three-day workshop focused on building capacity for mixed-methods research, covering both quantitative and qualitative approaches with an emphasis on ethics, field readiness, and data quality. As part of the qualitative stream, Mrs Namukanga engaged in tool piloting and collaborative learning, contributing to discussions on strengthening methodological rigor and future capacity-building initiatives. During the subsequent field visit to Mansa, with a focus on zero-dose children, she participated as Team Lead, overseeing visits to four health facilities and engaging with caregivers, health facility staff, and district and provincial health officials to assess the fidelity of immunisation strategies and identify barriers to coverage. Key findings highlighted the role of community engagement, persistent health system constraints, and variations in implementation fidelity across facilities. Mrs Namukanga continues to contribute to data analysis, knowledge dissemination, and manuscript preparation, ensuring UUZM's involvement is reflected in scholarly outputs and collaborative efforts to strengthen immunisation research in Zambia.





ZCHAD DISSEMINATION MEETING: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE ZAMBIA COHORT OF HEALTHY AGING & DEMENTIA

Mrs Namukanga represented Unicaf University, Zambia (UUZM) at the Zambia Cohort of Healthy Aging & Dementia (ZCHAD) dissemination meeting, held on 6 August 2025 in Lusaka. The meeting convened stakeholders from public health, clinical practice, and community sectors to review preliminary findings on cognitive health and dementia risk factors in Zambia. Discussions emphasised the burden of undiagnosed cognitive impairment, the influence of comorbidities and social determinants, and the need to integrate cognitive health into existing national health strategies. Opportunities for collaboration were also identified, including development of a national dementia action plan, training of primary healthcare providers, and public awareness initiatives.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DISSEMINATION AND FUNDING INFORMATION WORKSHOP

Representing Unicaf University, Zambia, Dr Attridge Mwelwa (DVC Research & Innovation) and Mrs. Emily Kamizi (Research Officer) participated in the Research and Innovation Dissemination and Funding Information Workshop, held on 19 August 2025 at the University of Zambia (UNZA).

The workshop, organized by UNZA in collaboration with the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), the Delegation of the European Union to the African Union, and EURAXESS Africa, aimed to enhance researchers' awareness of funding opportunities, strengthen proposal development skills, and foster collaboration between Zambian and international institutions.

Key sessions highlighted the NSTC's National Research Fund and the Science and Technology Innovation Youth Fund, alongside the European Union's Horizon Europe programme, with particular focus on the

Africa Initiative III. Presentations showcased cutting-edge research in areas such as electric vehicle battery value chains, climate-resilient agriculture, gastric cancer, and geospatial Al applications. In addition, participants were introduced to support mechanisms available through EURAXESS Africa and Erasmus+, emphasising mobility, networking, and access to international research frameworks.

The workshop provided practical guidance identifying funding opportunities, preparing proposals, and engaging in strategic partnerships. High-level policy dialogues reinforced the need to align national priorities with global funding while networking sessions strategies, encouraged collaboration across institutions.

The workshop concluded with strengthened researcher capacity, enhanced awareness of funding mechanisms, and new opportunities for Zambia's integration into international research networks.



RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT UNICAF UNIVERSITY IN MALAWI

RESEARCH LAB SERIES - SESSION 1: DESIGNING ACADEMIC AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH

On 30th April 2025, Unicaf University, Malawi hosted the first session of its Research Lab Series, a new initiative designed to build research capacity among students and the wider academic community. The session, held online via Zoom, was attended by 63 participants, including undergraduate and postgraduate students, academic staff, and members of the public. Facilitated by Dr Masebo (Dean of School of Business and Management), (Key Facilitator) and Dr Manda (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research), (Co-Facilitator), the session focused on the fundamentals of designing research for both academic and industry settings.

Dr Masebo introduced key elements of research design, including the formulation of research problems, setting of objectives, and the methodological differences between academic and applied research. The session emphasised the importance of aligning research approaches with context-specific needs; whether contributing to scholarly knowledge or addressing practical challenges in the field.

The interactive Q&A segment allowed participants to explore real-world issues such as research in constrained environments, collaboration with industry stakeholders, and balancing theoretical and applied goals. The facilitators provided insightful responses that encouraged critical reflection and practical thinking.

This first workshop laid a solid foundation for the next sessions in the series, which will address research execution and publishing. The initiative represents a valuable step toward strengthening research literacy and encouraging dialogue between academic and industry research cultures.

RESEARCH LAB SERIES - SESSION 2: CONDUCTING ACADEMIC AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH

The second session of the Research Lab Series, hosted by Unicaf University, Malawi on 28th May 2025, focused on the practical processes of conducting research across academic and industry settings. Facilitated by Dr Mondiwa (Director of Clinical Practice and Senior Lecturer in Education and Health), with co-facilitation from Dr Manda and Dr Masebo, the session engaged 84 participants from a range of academic and professional backgrounds.

The session covered key data collection methods including case studies, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and experimental designs. A notable inclusion was the discussion on integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and ethical considerations into contemporary research practices. Facilitators contextualised these methods through real-world examples and interactive dialogue, bridging methodological theory with applied practice.

Participants actively engaged during the Q&A segment, raising questions about methodological challenges, ethical dilemmas, and constraints commonly encountered in fieldwork. Closing remarks reinforced the importance

of methodological rigour, adaptability, and ethical responsibility; particularly as Al tools increasingly influence research design and data handling.

Session 2 was successful in content delivery and engagement, furthering the series' goal of strengthening research competence. The session laid strong groundwork for the final instalment, which will focus on research dissemination and publishing.



RESEARCH LAB SERIES - FINAL SESSION ON ACADEMIC AND APPLIED RESEARCH PUBLISHING

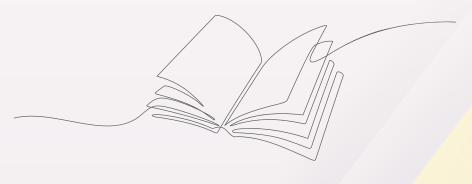
The third and concluding session of the Research Lab Series at Unicaf University, Malawi was held online via Zoom on 25th June 2025. The session, facilitated by Dr Manda, Dr Mondiwa, and Dr Wilfred Masebo, focused on demystifying the research publishing process and equipping participants with practical knowledge for sharing their work in academic journals and industry platforms.

Approximately 65 participants attended, including students, independent researchers, and professionals. While student attendance was lower than previous sessions, the session maintained strong engagement through a structured program comprising a keynote presentation, supplementary insights from co-facilitators, an interactive Q&A, and concluding reflections.

Dr Manda's presentation addressed key aspects of research publishing, including the importance of publishing, types of publications, journal selection, referencing styles, and understanding journal rankings and impact factors. Dr Mondiwa and Dr Masebo supplemented this with reflections on navigating peer review, aligning research with professional goals, and sharing personal publishing experiences. The Q&A segment provided participants with practical guidance on reviewer responses, ethical co-authorship, and selecting high-impact journals.

Concluding remarks emphasised clarity in writing, seeking mentorship, and adopting publishing as an ongoing professional practice. Despite communication delays affecting student outreach, the session reinforced Unicaf University, Malawi's commitment to fostering research excellence and scholarly engagement.





STUDENTS' HUB

This edition also features an insightful article by Dr Yiota Apostolou-Christou titled "The Role of Health and Sciences in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." The article examines how health and scientific disciplines contribute to global progress on the SDGs through research, innovation, and practical applications. It highlights the importance of transdisciplinary collaboration, policy integration, and equitable access to knowledge and resources in advancing sustainable development for all.

THE ROLE OF HEALTH AND SCIENCES IN ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE **DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

The Sustainable Development Goals were established and adopted by all United Nations (UN) Member States in 2015 as a global collective effort by 2030 to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, safeguard human rights and achieve economic and sustainable development while preserving the environment with the aim that no one is left behind (UN, 2025). Half way through the journey to 2030 and after decades of work, the latest implementation progress report revealed that only 17% of the SDGs targets are on track to be achieved while over a third has stalled or even regressed with developing countries mostly falling behind despite Official Development Assistance (UN, 2024).

In this article, the role of Health and Sciences in achieving the SDGs is examined by highlighting examples of contribution to individual SDGs. It is evident that Health science and applied sciences hold the potential to developing transformative pathways towards the achievement of the SDGs and specific SDG targets through scientific knowledge, research and methodological and technological advancements and innovations (UN, 2016).



THE ROLE OF HEALTH SCIENCE IN ACHIEVING THE SDGS

Health stakeholders include medical and nursing staff, technical experts, managers, and service providers, with specific roles and input for accountable, fair, equitable and sustainable health service provision. According to the SDG Progress Report, while there has been improvement on some health targets, progress is decelerating on maternal mortality, premature deaths from major noncommunicable diseases and access to essential healthcare with major inequalities seen among vulnerable populations (UN, 2024).

Strategies such as monitoring the performance of healthcare staff enables identification of gaps in knowledge or practice to provide relevant education and specialised training for skills development, whilst integrating care and scientific research in health significantly influence the diagnosis, management and treatment of health outcomes. Training healthcare providers to skilled birth attendants contributes to SDG3 targets 3.1 and 3.2 through the management of labour complications (Zegeye et al., 2022, Dwivedi et al., 2024) while updated and good knowledge of screening and diagnostic tools and of disease symptoms ensures correct diagnosis and management of diseases contributing to SDG3 targets 3.3, 3.4 and 3.9 and SDG2 target 2.2.

The availability, accessibility and affordability of healthcare are major determinants of good health and wellbeing by ensuring fairness, equity and coverage for everyone and alleviating financial hardship. Healthcare is delivered at different levels of the health system including community outreach, primary care, hospital care, referral systems and emergency medical services. Therefore, the development and enactment of strategies and regulations by healthcare management and health policy makers regarding the provision of quality health services, sufficient workforce, equipped and adequately financed health institutions, universal health coverage and subsidised health plans -like national health insurance schemes- enable progress towards SDG3 targets 3.7, 3.8 and 3.c, SDG1 targets 1.3, 1.a.2 and 1.b.1 and SDG5 targets 5.2, 5.4 and 5.6 (WB, 2025, Kruk et al., 2018).

'Health Promotion' is equally important to the achievement of SDGs. Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. Health promotion is not just prevention of death and illness but the promotion of overall health and well-being and the generation of environments supporting health benefits and healthy choices aiming to a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (WHO, 1986). The main principles of human rights, empowerment and partnership underpin the plurality of health promotion interventions at the individual or population levels to address the social determinants of health and associated risk factors.

Health promotion interventions can be educational for communities or population groups, preventative to ameliorate disease incidence or, therapeutic (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation) (Smith et al., 2015), therefore impacting SDG3 targets 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.a. Health promotion interventions can also pertain to water and sanitation influencing SDG6 targets 6.2, 6.3 and 6.b, housing and food security affecting SDG3 target 3.9 and SDG2 targets 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, and employment and working conditions therefore contributing to SDG8 target 8.5, 8.6, 8.7 and 8.8, SDG10 target 10.2 and SDG16 targets 16.1 and 16.2.



THE ROLE OF SCIENCES IN ACHIEVING THE SDGS

Sciences such as biology, chemistry, physics, geology and mathematics comprise the fundamental principles for understanding the natural world and related challenges and for developing innovative solutions to practical problems. Ecology (a discipline of Biology) and Environmental science enable understanding of ecosystems, environmental degradation and climate change to be able to develop mitigation and adaptation strategies. Ending destructive fishing practices and unregulated fishing, implementing science-based management plans to restore fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels, using ecosystem-based approaches to manage, protect and conserve coastal and marine areas (Diz, 2019) address SDG14 targets 14.2, 14.4, 14.5 and 14.c.

Conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems through the implementation of protected areas, terminating deforestation and restoring degraded forests, combating desertification and restoring degraded land and soil, taking action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats and the loss of biodiversity by integrating ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, and ending poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna (Klein, 2020), promote the achievement of SDG15 targets 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.5, 15.7 and 15.9. Monitoring and reporting climate change, providing early warning and increasing citizenship education, institutional awareness and financial support to developing countries assist to the development of disaster risk reduction strategies and strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters (Arora and Mishra, 2023) that collectively contribute towards SDG13 targets 13.1, 13.2, 13.3 and 13.6, SDG3 targets 3.9 and 3.d and SDG2.

Biology (biotechnology, biochemistry, microbiology) and medicine contribute to the development of disease prevention measures and therapeutic treatments. Vaccination, besides an indisputable human right, it is also a significant health investment since vaccines for the prevention and control of infectious disease outbreaks have greatly alleviated disease burden and mortality in vulnerable and high-risk populations (Carter et al., 2024). Major examples are the vaccines for tuberculosis, Hepatitis, Polio, MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) and chickenpox in children, hepatitis B, meningitis, and HPV (Human papillomavirus) in adults, as well as malaria and cholera in high-risk populations that impacting on SDG3 targets 3.2, 3.3 and 3.b, SDG1 target 1.a and SDG17. The development, availability, and affordability of medicines for chronic diseases such as anti-retroviral drugs for people leaving with HIV/AIDS, cytotoxic and adjuvant medicines for cancer and medicines for cardiovascular disease and diabetes (Beran et al., 2019) promote SDG3 targets 3.3, 3.4, 3.8 and 3.b, SDG10 targets 10.a and 10.b and SDG17.

Innovative solutions and technological advancements originate from sciences through transdisciplinary approaches and activities. Biotechnology, biology and botany can increase food security and reduce hunger by improving agricultural methods, crops' yields and nutrient-fortification of crops through genetic engineering and alternative farming techniques (Medialdea et al., 2018) towards the attainment of SDG2 targets 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5, SDG15 targets 15.5, 15.6, 15.7 and 15.8 and SDG1.

Physics, chemistry and engineering pioneer developments for, renewable energy technologies to divert from fossil to clean fuels or hybrid systems (Lup et al., 2023, Chatterjee et al., 2023), water distribution networks, new local water sources, water storage or recycling and provision of water free from contaminants using inexpensive treatment approaches (Gene et al., 2020), as well as safe, sustainable and resilient buildings and infrastructure thus contributing to SDG7 targets 7.1, 7.2, 7a and 7.b, SDG6 targets 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.a

and 6.b, SDG11 targets 11.1, 11.3, 11.5, 11.7, 11.b and 11.c, SDG9, SDG12 and

SDG13.

In conclusion, there has been steady progress and improvement for some SDG targets such as reduction in global infant mortality rate and incidence of HIV infection, increased access to water, sanitation and energy but, significant effort is still required in the areas of hunger, education, gender equality and climate action. Although health and sciences can contribute to the achievement of several SDGs, there is a great need for transdisciplinary approaches involving sciences, policy, and society. Global collaboration, exchange of knowledge and expertise, advocacy and financial and technical support are also paramount for developing countries and vulnerable populations that are usually left behind in the stride towards these ambitious goals.



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EYES TO THE FUTURE



In this edition of Eyes to the Future, we continue to highlight the research contributions of our graduate students. This series showcases thesis projects that address pressing academic and societal challenges, providing insights into the motivations behind the research and its potential impact. Each month, we feature responses from selected graduates to three key questions:

What was your research about?

What inspired you to choose this topic?

How might your findings benefit Africa?

Recent graduates who wish to share their research are invited to contribute by responding to these questions at the provided link.

In this edition, we are pleased to feature Dr Jane Bethuel Peter, who recently earned her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education from Unicaf University in Zambia and Dr Emily Grace Chiumia Mwale, a graduate of Unicaf University in Malawi, who recently earned her Doctorate of Education (EdD) in Inclusive Education.



With over 16 years of hands-on experience in the education field, Dr Jane Bethuel Peter is passionate about helping individuals reach their full potential. Her expertise spans a wide range of areas, including the application of technology in education, project management, monitoring and evaluation, instructional and eLearning design, research, and innovation. Throughout her career, Dr Peter has led and contributed to numerous impactful projects in Tanzania, particularly in education management, capacity building, digital transformation, institutional policy development, and online content creation. She also possesses strong proficiency in a variety of commercial software applications, from Microsoft Office to data analysis and communication tools. Her doctoral thesis, titled "e-Pedagogy: Towards the Model for Technology-Based Education for Secondary Schools in Tanzania", reflects her deep commitment to enhancing education through innovative, tech-driven approaches.

Abstract: Technology has become an enabler for transforming teaching and learning practices. However, consideration of contemporary educational issues should go hand in hand with technology integration. The study focused on the establishment of the pedagogical model for technology-based education through examination of effective integration of digital tools and on developing a connection between instructional technology and pedagogical models, principles and practices. Both primary and secondary data were collected through interviews, observation checklists and a desk review. The purposive sampling technique was used to select participants and documents. The sample included ten (10) educational institutions from which 22 instructors, 25 students and 4 education officers were recruited. The documents included institutional policies and scholarly articles. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse nominal data collected from structured interviews, while content analysis was used to analyse secondary data.



The findings revealed that technological media and tools such as discussion forums, emails, Google Docs, and social media applications are used to support technological pedagogical practices that are group work-based, such as brainstorming and role-playing and involve the use of case studies. The study also revealed that digital resources and tools such as the internet, video conferencing, mobile technology, artificial reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, games, digital

libraries, social media, wikis, MOOCs and learning management systems are used to facilitate engagement, collaboration, creativity and innovation to improve problem solving and communication skills.

Furthermore, the learner-centred approach and the authentic and transformational models were found to be appropriate approaches and models in digital learning. Besides this, the study found that insufficient technological resources, lack of competence among instructors, destructive use of technology by students and lack of technical experts to support technology use were among the limitations of the technological pedagogical application. Other barriers include the unavailability of relevant policies to guide technology application, instructors' and parents' beliefs and attitudes and the lack of an appropriate governance structure for technology integration. Based on these findings, it is suggested that regular training be conducted on technological pedagogical knowledge for teachers; adopting an approach to minimizing the cost of technological resources; orienting and enforcing ethical practices when using technology; and establishing mentorship programs for

awareness creation among instructors, students and parents. The study results contributed toward the development of the pedagogical model for technologybased integration among secondary schools in Tanzania. The model will enable the educators to ensure that technology integration is considered along with pedagogy.



What was your research about?

JBP: This study was about establishing a pedagogical model for technology-based teaching among Secondary Schools in Tanzania. The researcher seeks to contribute to the construction of a valid pedagogical model that utilises the perceived accordance of technology in the classroom in order to enhance the teaching and learning process.

What led you to choose this topic for your PhD research?



JBP: Technology has a potential role to play in the education sector; this includes increasing learners' engagement and motivation. Integrating technology in education has significantly impacted the teaching and learning process; it has created a faster, efficient, effective and interactive classroom experience. However, integration of technology in education demands for a new approach; this is because technology has created a shift from teacher-centred approaches to teaching to a student-focused and more shared learning experience which also influences changes in the teaching methodology.

The major reason for choosing this topic is to participate in the reconstruction of the education system by contributing to the development of a pedagogical framework which is relevant to technology-based education. This model will facilitate the provision of sophisticated pedagogical knowledge to teachers in order to improve their use of educational technology and teaching effectiveness. This is the driving force behind the development of approaches and strategies that will make use of the rich and exciting opportunities offered by the technology that arises.

How do you think the findings of your research could be useful in Africa's context?

JBP: This study was conducted in Tanzania; the information which was recorded was based on the Tanzanian context. The primary data focuses on technological infrastructures, pedagogical models, principles, practices, and operational and supporting technologies. The researchers also recorded a number of challenges associated with technology integration in Tanzania. Secondary data collected which were collected through desk review was mostly information from local researchers as well as researchers who were conducting research in Africa. Most African countries share the same challenges when it comes to issues like reliable power supply, internet connectivity, technological literacy, financial stability, policies, as well as cultural beliefs.

However, these were found to be the major issues that limit the ability of the country to fully harness the potential benefits of technology, especially in the education sector. In this regard, it is a researcher's belief that the findings of this study will be useful in most African countries.





Dr Emily Grace Chiumia Mwale has built a distinguished career in the education sector, having served as a secondary school teacher, gender and human rights coordinator for the Nkhoma Synod HIV/AIDS program, lecturer, Deputy Dean, Dean of the Faculty of Education, and Acting Registrar at Nkhoma University. She now holds the esteemed position of Vice Chancellor at Nkhoma University. Her doctoral thesis, titled "An Investigation into the Challenges of Inclusive Education in Institutions of Higher Learning in Malawi," reflects her dedication to fostering equity and accessibility in education.

Abstract: Inclusive education started to receive increased attention following its affirmation from the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education held at Salamanca in Spain. The inclusion of learners in mainstream school fulfils the Declaration of the Universal Human Rights which encompasses the rights of children and the World Declaration of Education for All.

Therefore, equal access and participation to all are strategic to the provision of the basic right to education through inclusive education. Inclusive education is central to the achievement of Malawi's 2063 vision of "an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation". However, studies indicated that learners with disabilities are persistently affected by multiple challenges leading to exclusion or school drop-out. Previous studies focused on primary and secondary school sectors hence, this study aims at investigating challenges of inclusive education in institutions of higher education in Malawi.

Following a pragmatic philosophical approach, this mixed study used an exploratory research design. A survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews were used in complementary to collect quantitative and qualitative data from 125 participants in the categories of learners, lecturers, and administrators from ten institutions. Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data was done using the SPSS computer application and content scrutiny correspondingly. The study established low enrolment of learners with disabilities in institutions of higher learning. Findings also indicated disparities in views on the effectiveness of inclusive education and accommodation of the types and degrees of disabilities. The study also revealed that challenges contribute to low effectiveness of inclusive education namely lack of relevant technical expertise, resources, disability friendly infrastructure and policy.

Implications include systematic discrimination leading to intellectual inequalities and increased social gaps; need for capacity building; and lack of awareness on inclusive education issues among stakeholders. The study demonstrated that intellectual inequalities contradict human rights; proposed a modification of medical disability model for positive inclusion and documented the gaps to inform policy. Further study to assess performance and evaluate current strategies.



What was your research about?

EM: The challenges that are encountered in the implementation of inclusive education in the institutions of higher learning in Malawi. These are challenges that affect the processes that are, the means of providing inclusive education, the institutions' capacity, the learners with disability themselves and the policy bodies; and they compromise the goal of inclusive education.

What led you to choose this topic for your PhD research?

EM: My passion for the kind of education that is inclusive for all learners as a means of empowerment in their socio-economic life. Throughout my teaching career I observed the disparities among learners of different abilities and this was confirmed by literature that there is a growing number of learners with disabilities but also a persistence of challenges that they face compromising their progress in the field of education.

How do you think the findings of your research could be useful in Africa's context?

EM: These findings will provide a documentation of the challenges in Inclusive Education that will inform stakeholders and assist in the formation of strategies to deal with the challenges for the improvement of inclusion services in the field of education; lobby for the rights of learners with disabilities for equity in education - so that institutions deliberately work towards providing them with the necessary support for them to learn; and a positive perspective of the medical disability model providing a basis for diverse and unique interventions for diverse disabilities.



RECENT UNICAF PUBLICATIONS NEW PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS BY OUR STUDENTS AND FACULTY



Students:

Adoboi, F., & Mohammadnezhad, M. (2025). A systematic review study on lived experiences of people living with Hepatitis B (PLHB). Global Journal of Health Science, 17(1), 63. https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v17n1p63

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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES IF YOU HAVE THE IDEA; WE CAN HELP YOU WITH FUNDING



UK - LMIC Research Partnership for the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team

Deadline: 27 November

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Health

Spence Foundation - Small grants

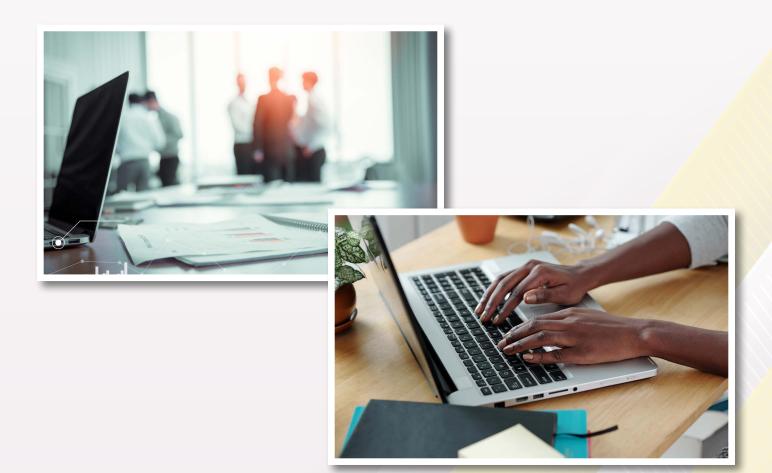
Deadline: 15 December

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Education

ACU - Supporting Research Community Training Grants

Deadline: 8 April 2026

Area/Disciplines/Themes: fund staff at ACU member universities to organise and deliver training for their early and/or mid-career researchers, including doctoral candidates



FELLOWSHIPS / AWARDS / COURSES **LIST OF FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS AND COURSES**



CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholars Program

Deadline: 5 November

Area/Disciplines/Themes: natural, biomedical, and social sciences, as well as the humanities.

Wellcome Career Development Awards

Area/Disciplines/Themes: human life, health and wellbeing

Deadline: 20 November



CALLS FOR CONFERENCES AND EVENTS (WORKSHOP / WEBINARS) **UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**



Save the Date: Annual Unicaf Master's Conference 2025

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Annual Unicaf Master's Conference 2025, taking place online from 17th to 21st November 2025. Sessions will run daily, starting each day at 09:00 am Cyprus time (UTC+2). Please be sure to confirm your local time here.

This virtual event offers a fantastic opportunity to attend fellow students' presentations and engage in dynamic discussion sessions. More details, including the conference programme and reminders, will be shared as the event approaches.

Zoom Registration link: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pb7qS2fSQMWHW1OSQ2CPnw

For any inquiries, please contact the respective schools at:

business-school@unicaf.org

science-school@unicaf.org

humanities-school@unicaf.org

We look forward to your participation in this exciting academic event!

Unical University Doctoral Research Groups (for Doctoral Students)

The Doctoral Research Groups (DRGs)'s aim is to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange and feedback provision between doctoral researchers and faculty, with a view of advancing original and rigorous research. The initiative is aimed at Unicaf University doctoral researchers and faculty, during which doctoral researchers present ideas and share expertise that can enhance their research. The open dialogue between doctoral researchers working on similar subjects will facilitate information exchange and will be a vibrant forum in which students can receive feedback on their work.



The next Doctoral Research Groups are held on:

OCTOBER, 2025

23 October 2025, Doctoral Research Groups: Information Technology

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PL_xBjfRReavSyRZ1iu2Pw

14:00 - 16:00 (Cyprus time) Presenters: To Be Announced

NOVEMBER, 2025

13 November 2025, Doctoral Research Groups: Business

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Qx_Zm6bmTta4gbb7no09lg

14:00 - 16:00 (Cyprus time) Presenters: To Be Announced

20 November 2025, Doctoral Research Groups: Law and Politics

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hJdI67q1QdO6on9qSi4c3A

14:00 - 16:00 (Cyprus time) Presenters: To Be Announced

DECEMBER, 2025

11 December 2025, Doctoral Research Groups: Education

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uY8gkOs6TLikVtyLEk6aJA

14:00 - 16:00 (Cyprus time) Presenters: To Be Announced

JANUARY, 2026

14 January 2026, Doctoral Research Groups: Information Technology

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_0SLbFEI0QkgytZ2RIVgAYQ

14:00 - 16:00 (Cyprus time) Presenters: To Be Announced

More information regarding the Doctoral Research Groups can be found on our webpage.



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Additionally, please mention whether the publication is affiliated with Unicaf / Unicaf University.

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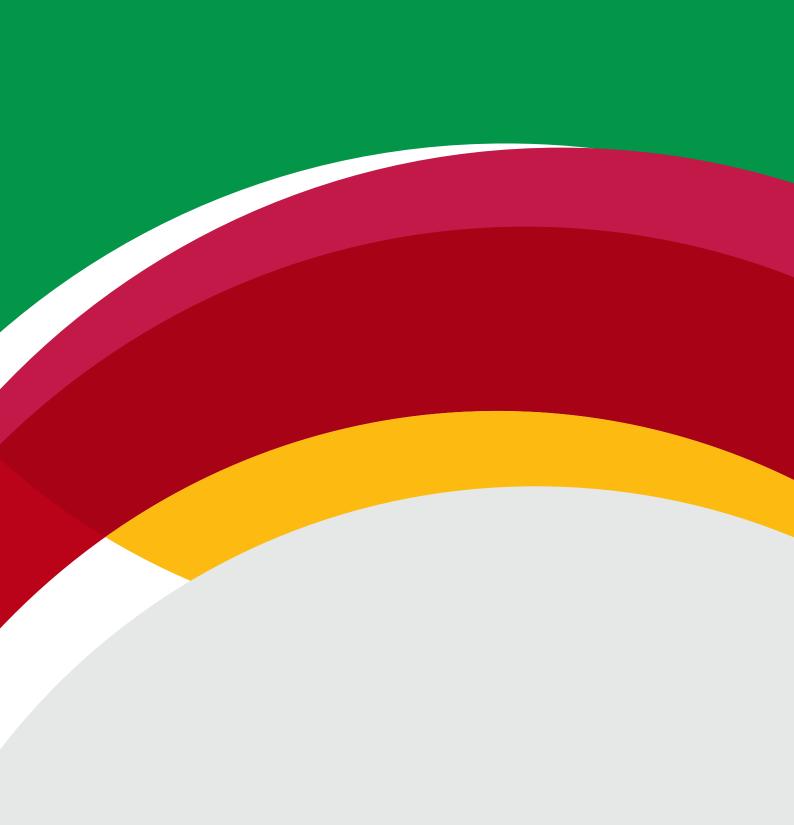
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