

Global Mental Health Mission Brings Expert Training and Transformative Community Outreach to Kitale, Kenya

Mount Kenya University, Casaupendo Orphanage, and global partners unite education, mental health, humanitarian service, and hope in Kenya.

KITALE, GREENSPAN, KENYA, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Mental health professionals, educators, humanitarian leaders, and community partners from Kenya and the United States came together in Kitale, Kenya, for a multifaceted international mission designed to strengthen mental health awareness, expand trauma-informed practices, equip emerging professionals, and bring messages of hope, healing, resilience, and purpose directly into the community.



From left to right, Jacob Onkunya; Tuphosa I. O. Amere, HSC, County Government of Transzoia -County Secretary; Dr. Michelle Boone-Thornton World Civility Ambassador IChangeNations TM; Dr. Sarah Namukoa Sasaka, Casaupendo CBO Director; Marris Thornton, D

Led and coordinated by the [“Mother of Mental Health”](#), Ambassador [Dr. Michelle Boone-Thornton, EdD, QMHP](#), the Kitale mission brought together international delegates and Kenyan partners for a series of programs centered on one overarching belief: meaningful change occurs when education moves beyond the classroom and reaches the people and communities who need it most.

Central to the mission was the Global Mental Health Symposium 2026 at Mount Kenya University–Kitale Campus, held August 4–5. The two-day symposium created an international platform for conversations surrounding mental, emotional, and physical well-being and challenged participants to examine the “masks” individuals often wear to conceal pain, trauma, fear, stress, and other life experiences.

The symposium featured Dr. Jane G. Nyutu, Licensed Counseling Psychologist, Director of Mind & Beyond, and Co-Founder and Board Member of Mount Kenya University; Ambassador Dr.

Michelle Boone-Thornton, Qualified Mental Health Professional, educator, global humanitarian, and founding member of the Mental Health Awareness & Response for Africa (MHARA); Dr. Tiona Praylow, psychiatrist and founder of REST; Dr. Debbie Hood, Licensed Professional Counselor; and Dr. Sarah Namukoa Sasaka, CEO of Casaupendo Orphanage and a key Kenyan partner in the international mission.

Dr. Boone-Thornton opened the training series with “Transforming Your Reality: Why We Wear the Mask,” exploring the personal, social, cultural, and emotional factors that can lead individuals to hide what they are experiencing.

Dr. Praylow continued the conversation with “The Hidden Cost of Masking: Mental, Emotional, and Physical Health,” examining how unresolved experiences and concealed emotional struggles can affect the whole person.

Dr. Hood concluded the training progression with “Removing the Mask: Practical Strategies for Growth, Healing, and Resilience,” providing practical approaches for moving toward greater emotional wellness and resilience.

Together, the sessions moved over 500 participants from awareness to understanding and, ultimately, toward strategies for healing and growth.

“

Dr. Michelle Boone-Thornton is known as the ‘Mother of Mental Health’ because she nurtures healing, develops leaders, builds bridges, and carries mental health advocacy into communities worldwide.”

HRH King Dr. Ruben West, USA

understanding emotions.



On the left, Dr. Jane Nyutu cofounder of Mount Kenya University, middle, Dr. Michelle Boone-Thornton World Civility Ambassador IChange Nations (TM), Marrisa Thornton, Dr. Michelle Boone-Thornton Foundation Board Chair

Taking Mental Health Education Beyond the University
The mission did not end inside the university.

Training and outreach extended into the Kitale community, including Casaupendo Orphanage, where the international delegation worked alongside Dr. Sarah Namukoa Sasaka and the Casaupendo leadership team to engage children through developmentally appropriate mental-health education, mentoring, storytelling, home visitation, creative expression, and activities centered on

Dr. Boone-Thornton and Sherriann Harris, Therapeutic Art Professional, presented "Discovering Emotions: Peeling Back the Mask," incorporating the Transforming Your Reality: Removing the Mask framework and a hands-on assessment activity designed to help children identify, express, and better understand their emotions.

The experience reinforced a critical component of the mission: children need safe spaces and trusted adults who help them understand that their feelings have names, their voices matter, and difficult experiences do not have to define their futures.

International participation included Dr. Tiona Praylow, Dr. Debbie Hood, Ti'Juana Gholson, Dr. Denell Parker, Edna Johnson-Smith, Marrisa Thornton, Sherriann Harris, Pastor Edwin and Hilda Guess, and Dr. Shamirah Hughes who contributed through professional presentations, outreach, mentoring, prayer, home visitation, and direct engagement with children and families.

Rev. Dr. Sheila McKeithen of Jamaica and Shant'a Miller White, Founder and Executive Director of Parents Against Bullying, contributed to the children's programming by providing books to the children for the storytelling activity.

The event was highlighted with the awarding of community, government, and university leaders, hosted by special guest His Royal Highness (HRH) King Dr. Ruben West, Special Envoy of iChangeNations. HRH also attended and helped facilitate one of the breakout sessions during the two-day mental health symposium.

Strengthening Trauma-Informed Care

An important component of the Kitale mission was Trauma-Informed Care Training, expanding the conversation beyond recognizing trauma to understanding how professionals, educators, caregivers, ministries, institutions, and community leaders can respond to individuals with greater awareness, compassion, dignity, and sensitivity.



2026 Kitale, Kenya iChange Nations (TM) award recipients



the children of Casaupendo Orphanage,

Rather than simply asking, “What is wrong with this person?” trauma-informed practice encourages professionals to consider what an individual may have experienced and how those experiences influence behavior, relationships, emotional regulation, learning, health, and decision-making.

The training reflected the mission's commitment to building sustainable capacity—equipping those who serve others with knowledge and strategies that can continue benefiting communities long after the international delegation returns home.

A Mission Built Through Partnership

The Kitale initiative represents an expanding global partnership involving Mount Kenya University–Kitale Campus, Casaupendo Orphanage, the Ambassador Michelle Boone-Thornton Foundation, MHARA, Kenyan community partners, mental-health professionals, educators, humanitarian leaders, and members of the United States delegation.

Key leadership and support throughout the Kitale mission included Mr. Peter Njenga Njoroge, Director at Mount Kenya University–Kitale Campus; Dr. Jane G. Nyutu; Emmanuel Sasaka; Dr. Sarah Namukoa Sasaka; Jacob Onkunya; Marrisa Thornton; and Ambassador Dr. Michelle Boone-Thornton, along with the international delegation of professionals who traveled to Kenya to serve.

The initiative was designed not as a one-time intervention, but as another step in building sustainable bridges between professionals and communities across nations.

From Removing the Mask to Restoring Hope

For Ambassador Dr. Boone-Thornton, the work represents the convergence of decades devoted to education, human services, pastoral counseling, mental health, children, families, and community service.

The philosophy behind Transforming Your Reality: Removing the Mask recognizes that people across cultures may look successful, strong, accomplished, or emotionally well while privately carrying grief, trauma, fear, rejection, anxiety, or other painful experiences.

The mission therefore asks a deeper question: What becomes possible when people are given



Humanitarian Diplomat HRH King Dr. Ruben Maurice West - USA and the "Mother of Mental Health", World Civility Ambassador Dr. Michelle Boone-Thornton - USA

safe spaces to remove the mask?

In Kitale, the answer could be seen in university classrooms, professional conversations, community outreach, children's activities, mentoring relationships, home visits, and moments of connection between people from different nations who discovered that the human need to be seen, heard, valued, and supported transcends geography.

The work also demonstrated the importance of taking mental-health education beyond traditional clinical settings. Mental health belongs in universities and professional spaces, but it also belongs in schools, homes, churches, children's programs, humanitarian organizations, and communities.

Building the Next Bridge

As the 2026 Kitale mission concludes, its organizers are already looking toward the future. Universities, mental-health professionals, counselors, psychiatrists, social workers, educators, humanitarian organizations, faith-based organizations, foundations, corporations, community leaders, donors, and individuals committed to improving mental and emotional well-being are invited to explore opportunities to collaborate in future international training, missions, professional exchanges, community outreach, and humanitarian initiatives.

The invitation is especially extended to professionals who believe their education and expertise can become instruments of service beyond their own communities and national borders.

The message emerging from Kitale is simple but powerful:

Global transformation begins when people are willing to cross borders, share knowledge, build relationships, serve communities, and create spaces where others can heal, grow, and rediscover hope.

The Global Mental Health Symposium, Trauma-Informed Care Training, Transforming Your Reality: Removing the Mask initiative, and Casaupendo community outreach demonstrate what can happen when international partnership moves beyond conversation and becomes action.

Building Global Bridges. Transforming Lives. Creating Lasting Impact.

About the Kitale Global Mental Health Mission

The 2026 Kitale Global Mental Health Mission brought together professionals and humanitarian leaders from Kenya, the United States, and international partner networks to provide mental-health education, trauma-informed training, professional development, children's programming, community outreach, and humanitarian service. Activities were conducted in partnership with Mount Kenya University–Kitale Campus, Casaupendo Orphanage, the Ambassador Michelle Boone-Thornton Foundation, and collaborating organizations and professionals.

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