

# SONAM NEWS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE SCHOOL OF NURSING & MIDWIFERY, EAST AFRICA



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

## Message from the Dean

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

As the year comes to close and we all head off on a well-deserved break, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and applaud everyone for all their efforts, professional contributions and growth. It is all these seemingly small, incremental efforts that will propel the School of Nursing and Midwifery – East Africa (SONAM – EA) to the next level because organizational success and development is built on the foundation of individual growth. In reflecting and looking back at 2017, we all know we had goals that we have been trying to achieve here at SONAM – EA and just like you, I am happy to say I have been able to keep up with the best of you.

We started this newsletter to keep everyone informed about happenings within our school in East Africa. The feedback we have received has been very encouraging and we are now pleased to share a year-end snapshot of some more of the successes.

Measureable successes have been achieved in faculty development. We have increased our number of doctorally qualified faculty to nine and 12 more enrolled in PhD programmes both domestically and internationally. Many faculty successfully published their work and are now sharing research findings on international platforms. Year-to-date, we have 32 publications and still counting. We partnered with the Director of Alumni Affairs, Aga Khan University to connect with many of our alumni working across East Africa and have enjoyed welcoming more talented faculty and support staff to our SONAM team.

I'm so proud of everything we have been able to achieve this year. We have celebrated highlights such as Loveluck Mwashu from Tanzania being awarded the "Midwife for Life" Award for 2017 in Toronto and Miriam Nantamu from Uganda winning a coveted Commonwealth Scholarship to the University of Salford. Her PhD studies will focus on the use of technology and animations in nursing education. We say to her, well done and wish her good luck on her three-year journey. You can find the first part of her story inside this month's newsletter.

This past month our oncology students performed a brilliant play titled, "To disclose or not to disclose" that explored several ethical concerns around disclosing sensitive information about a patient's condition, both to the patient and their loved ones. The play attracted record crowds with over 200



nurses attending the early morning grand-rounds at Aga Khan University Hospital.

Gladys Mbutia and Dr Eunice Ndirangu travelled to Indianapolis, USA to present their research at the annual Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) conference as Joseph Mwizerwa, Isabel Kambo, Diana Kassaman, Carolyne Namukwaya and Judith Mutyabule arrived at Salford for their PhD induction. Dr Agnes Msoka presented her paper at the Institute for Human Development (IHD) conference in Dar es Salaam and we have since learned of the acceptance of one of her papers for publication. Dr Columba Mbekenga and Dr Eunice Ndirangu won Johnson and Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust (JJCT) scholarships to attend the first INSEAD programme delivered in Nairobi by the 'Business School of the World' internationally renowned for participant development of management and leadership skills.

Sadly, we have to say goodbye to Sara Leitão, our secondee from JJCT. She's been such a joy to have around and has contributed greatly to the project in Strengthening Professional Nursing and Midwifery Associations. We know that she will keep in touch and we look forward to welcoming the next and 5<sup>th</sup> secondee in 2018.

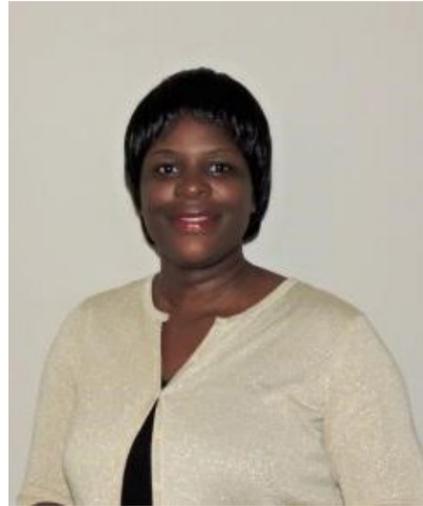
All in all, 2017 has been a very good year. We've been able to grow our student numbers and have new courses on the horizon. I find myself inspired and proud of everyone as we end the year on such a high note of achievement and learning. Please join me in this issue as we discover more about SONAM and what we have been able to do throughout December. Meantime, I wish you all the compliments of the season along with a safe and Happy New Year!

*Professor Sharon Brownie*  
**Dean**  
**SONAM EA**

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DECEMBER 2017



**Name:** Dr Constance Sibongile Shumba (Global Advisor Health, Aga Khan Foundation)

**What are you joining us as?**  
I am joining as an adjunct faculty.

**Take us through a brief background of your career path.**  
I provide strategic advice and support for AKF's global health and nutrition portfolio, with a particular focus on Africa. I have experience in comprehensive

sexual and reproductive health rights programmes; malaria; integrated community case management; outcomes and evaluation, quality improvement, research, curriculum development and health systems strengthening.

Additionally, I'm an honorary faculty member for the Masters in Public Health (MPH) programme at the University of Liverpool and I've worked with the University of Maryland in Baltimore, Institute of Human Virology and Malaria Consortium among other roles.

As regards Academic qualifications:

- PhD, International Health (Human Resources for Health), Queen Margaret University, Institute for International Health and Development, Edinburgh, Scotland.
- PhD, Health Studies (Gender Based Violence), University of South Africa.
- MSc, International Health (Health Systems, Health Policy and Management), Queen Margaret University, Institute for Health and Development, Edinburgh, Scotland
- BSc, Health Education and Health



**Name:** Kiraithe Peterson Karani

**What are you joining us as?**

I'm a research assistant for the Beginning Investigator Grant for Catalytic Research (BIG CAT) project, to support research in *Exploring health literacy levels of women diagnosed with cervical and/or breast cancers in Kenya.*

**Take us through a brief background of your career path.**

I hold a Master of Arts degree (Sociology –Entrepreneurship development), Bachelor of Arts Degree (Sociology and Geography) and Diploma in Criminology and Social Order from the University of Nairobi. I also have an Advanced Diploma in Project Management from the Institute of Commercial Management and a Diploma in Community Development

Promotion, University of Zimbabwe

**What three words describe your first few days so far?**

Inspiring, invigorating and enriching

**What's your favorite quote or personal mantra?**

*It is crooked wood that shows the best sculptor.* (African proverb)

**What inspired you to join SONAM?**

Professor Sharon Brownie inspired me when I travelled with her on a mission to Mozambique. We had a conversation about global health practice, research and education and I was thrilled when she suggested that with my education, skills and experience, I could be a valuable member of the SONAM team. It was the perfect opportunity for me to meld my interests in research, education and practice.

I consider myself a lifelong learner and joining SONAM gives me the privilege to continuously learn, and serve alongside esteemed colleagues in a thought-provoking atmosphere with inquisitive minds.

from Job Institute of Management.

Previously, I worked with the University of Nairobi as a Community Resource Mobilizer in the Centre for HIV Prevention and Research (CHIVPR) for six years. I have also worked for World Vision International as a Community Development Motivator/Officer for eight years. I have extensive experience in research work, dealing with data collection and analysis, project development, monitoring and social capital mobilization.

**What three words describe your first few days so far?**

Professional working environment

**What is your favorite quote or personal mantra?**

*Never grow weary, but get inspired*



**Name:** Martie Mahonga Mtange

**What are you joining us as?**

I'm joining as a writing consultant for the website and newsletter.

**Take us through a brief background of your career-path.**

I have a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce (Marketing and Entrepreneurship) but have been writing all my life. I've worked as a blogger and reporter for the StoryMoja Festival. I have also worked as a writer and research support for the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) and have written freelance for American magazines such as The Lost Coast Review. In addition



**Name:** Samwel Gatimu

**What are you joining us as?**

I'm joining as a research specialist to support research on the alumni impact survey.

**Take us through a brief background of your career path.**

Before joining SONAM, I worked in the humanitarian, clinical as well as research and project management consultancy sectors. For example, I worked as a consultant on the Novo Nordisk Diabetes Base of the Pyramid Project in Kenya (2016-2017) and Mwangaza Health Consultancy (2014-2017). Before that, I had served as a Project Officer managing maternal, neonatal and child health project in Tana River County, as a resource mobilizer, nursing officer and program associate.

I currently sit on the board of the Swedish

**Name:** Nepurko Keiwua

**What are you joining us as?**

I'm joining as a writing consultant for the website and newsletter.

**Take us through a brief background of your career path**

I have worked as a content creator and copywriter for the past six years in communications with a bias towards advertising. I have worked with various FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) brands, banks and retail clients to amplify and tell their stories creatively, on-line and in traditional media.

This past year I took a leap and decided

to this, I have been a curator at the African Heritage Design Company where I researched on and wrote stories about African artefacts. I also serve as Head of Partnerships at GrowMyHustle and Managing Editor of their newsletter.

**What three words describe your first few days so far?**

Purposeful, early and welcoming

**What's your favorite quote or personal mantra?**

*There's always a solution. It may be hiding, but there's always a solution.*

to create a writing consultancy to continue telling these fantastic stories on my own. I started working on my first client, a newly established natural hair and living magazine called Hairpolitan in 2016 and together, the creator and I have grown in leaps and bounds. I am here to amplify the wonderful stories that are created every day at SONAM.

**What three words describe your first few days so far?**

Warm, focused and hard-working

**What is your favourite quote or personal mantra?**

*Life is for the Living*



# From agriculture to microbial culture

## *The journey to the Commonwealth Scholarship*

By Martie Mtange

If you met Miriam 17 years ago in Mukono District, and told her that in 2017 she would be pursuing her PhD in the UK, without paying a cent, she probably would've asked why you're mocking her. In the year 2000, Miriam Nantamu dropped out of school for a reason that many Africans would identify with: to take care of her ailing father while managing the family farm.

Miriam's life has not been easy. "I always worked hard and got admitted to some of the best schools", she said, hinting that her second Commonwealth Scholarship to the University of Salford was a blessing, but not just a stroke of luck. The last-born of eight children became a member of faculty at SONAM Uganda in October 2016. She studied for her Bachelor of Nursing Science degree at the Mbarara University of Science and Technology, and then worked at Mengo Hospital as an intern. She couldn't have guessed that four years later she would be awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue a Masters of Nursing Education at the University of Salford. She's now done it again, winning another Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue her PhD in Nursing, with a focus in exploring the use of animations in nursing education.

Miriam's primary supervisor, Dr Mark Wilding couldn't hide his happiness at having Miriam back; sharing that, "The School of Health and Society at the University of Salford is delighted to welcome Miriam Nantamu from the Aga Khan University on a three-year Commonwealth Scholarship. This is a prestigious and highly competitive scholarship, which reflects Miriam's excellent academic potential. Miriam will work towards a PhD in nursing, investigating the use of animations in nurse education, and will return to Uganda to conduct her fieldwork. We look forward to working with Miriam over the next three years before she returns to the Aga Khan University."

It's quite curious, her chosen area of research: animations, isn't it? Well she assures us that we "will be happy to know that this project is not about cartoons or entertainment."

*Then what is it about?*

"Well, this project was born out of the challenges I faced as a student nurse and nurse educator. I happen to be a very visual person and tend to write summaries of notes and draw pictures to make sense of oral and verbal information presented to me ... When learning complex, dynamic processes (such as those that occur at cellular, tissue or organ level and mechanical ones such as the mechanism of labor) which cannot be demonstrated



Miriam Nantamu at the University of Salford

in the classroom, skills lab or clinical area, it becomes rather challenging for many students ... I thought of a way to make these processes visible for students so that the cognitive effort of having to animate them mentally is removed and they are left to dedicate mental effort to learning the process, bearing in mind that working memory is limited."

It's not difficult to tell what kind of person Miriam is. From sacrificing her studies to take care of her father, to pursuing a PhD study that revolves around helping students she may never meet navigate the world of nursing in an easier way. Miriam shows that the common wealth she has in abundance is care.

# Help is on the way

## *Cliff Aliga receives supervision support from Associate Professor Rachel Rossiter and Regional Librarian Peter Gatiti*

By Martie Mtange

Cliff Aliga, a senior instructor from the Uganda faculty recently learned that nothing beats the face-to-face approach when interacting with a supervisor during PhD preparation. His study on *Behavioral strategies to enhance the reporting of adverse events by healthcare practitioners in Uganda* was proving very difficult to contextualize.

Cliff had even started considering that his own research topic would seem redundant to outsider eyes if he did not put a context to it. Things were not looking up. This is why his two-day face-to-face intervention with his co-supervisor, Associate Professor Rachel Rossiter from Charles Sturt University, Australia and AKU Regional Librarian Peter Gatiti was vital.

Before the face-to-face session, Cliff had one main concern: *how can I explain the context of adverse event in Uganda characterized by inadequate systems to enhance reporting of adverse events?* It was proving difficult to find philosophical roots to his study, and finding contextual alternatives was not easy either. However, during his two-day session with Rachel, they concluded that narrating witnessed examples of adverse events could be an opening. He knew of a situation where a patient died instantly from high fever due to malaria after the administration of intravenous chloroquine. This could be the breakthrough they needed to provide an understanding of the context of Cliff's study. Cliff revealed, "The support centered on the epistemological foundation, in relation to the fourth world theory [is vital] to understand and explain the research context where systems for reporting and documenting adverse events are inherently difficult to trace."

After the session, Rachel called it "...an invigorating two days". She further shared that, "For me as co-supervisor, learning about the study context and the importance of the research topic for patient safety in Ugandan health care facilities helped me understand why Cliff had chosen this area to study. The struggle to identify a philosophical perspective within which the study could be situated, led to the discovery of a text published last year by Professor Patrick Ngulube from the University of South Africa. What a delight to find, when Mr Peter Gatiti (AKU - Librarian) joined us, that he knows Professor Ngulube personally and was able to share some additional helpful resources."

Peter Gatiti also appreciated the involvement, noting that "Building relationships with PhD enrolled faculty has helped the librarians to better understand the information needs of



Professor Rachel Rossiter and Cliff Aliga discussing his research topic



Cliff Aliga and Peter Gatiti engaging in a deep discussion

researchers and has provided an avenue for collaboration in research and scholarly communication."

SONAM – EA currently has twelve faculty enrolled in PhD programmes at the University of South Africa (UNISA), Stellenbosch University, SA and Salford University, UK. Each faculty member is supported by 20% protected research time and additional co-supervisor support to ensure each has the very best chance to complete their studies.

# A STICH in time

## Rethinking Health Care in East Africa

By Sara Leitão

INSEAD, The Business School for the World, and the Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizen Trust (JJCT) created the Strategic Innovation for Community Health (STICH) programme. STICH targets senior healthcare managers as well as individuals with medical, nursing, health education and public health backgrounds in order to address the rising challenge of developing new approaches for healthcare service design and delivery.

In the span of one week, 38 participants from 14 different countries dove deep into opportunities to further develop their leadership and innovation capacity, while realizing their vital role in building the resilience of communities and health systems. Historically implemented in Abu Dhabi, the programme took place for the first time in Nairobi, Kenya. Programme participants were exposed to key components of innovation such as change management, business model innovation as well as design thinking, thus allowing them to re-think health system delivery and gain core competencies in order to better implement innovative thinking.

Speaking to SONAM News, STICH Programme Director, Stephen Chick said, “Moving STICH to [...] Nairobi for the first time, this year, has been a very rewarding experience. There is so much creativity (sic) which the participants have, (sic) and so many insights from around Africa with regards to improving health care that were shared during this executive development initiative - including

[insights] from the four outstanding participants from (sic) the Aga Khan Network.”

Professor Chick was of course referring to two academic heads from SONAM-EA, Dr Eunice Ndirangu (Kenya) and Dr Columba Mbekenga (Tanzania), as well as Edna Tallam, CEO of Nursing Council of Kenya and Sisawo Konteh, COO of Aga Khan Health Services Tanzania who won scholarships courtesy of JJCT to participate in the weeklong programme this past November. East Africa was also well represented by Charles Soloka, Development Director Tanzania Nurses Association. With regard to her participation in the course, Ms Tallam had this to say about STICH, “My gratitude goes to Prof. Sharon Brownie for my nomination to the programme. The

Strategic Innovation for Community Health (STICH) programme provided useful insights on innovations [that] will drive the health care systems and regulation to greater heights. Going forward, I will put more emphasis on frontline office staff to meet value for customers through innovative delivery models. I recommend the programme to key actors in health care delivery.”

Mr Konteh had the following to say about his experience at STICH, “I am very excited to be part of STICH 2017, which is not just about how to learn innovation for business, but about how we can learn and build a more unique, creative-thinking way of Life, and become more holistically productive in the way we work, support our staff and improve virtually everything we do.



From left: Professor Sharon Brownie (Dean, SONAM – EA), Marion Birnstill (Manager, Corporate Social Responsibility, JJCT), Sara Leitao (Seconded, Johnson and Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust), Dr Eunice Ndirangu (Academic Head, SONAM – Kenya), Professor Stephen Chick (Director, STICH Programme), Dr Columba Mbekenga (Academic Head, SONAM – Tanzania), Benjamin Davies (Executive Director, Trust EMEA Lead, JJCT) and Edna Tallam (CEO, NCK)

STICH is applicable to every type of social work setting[s] in solving the world’s greatest problems of SERVICE delivery of any kind (sic). STICH methodology provides us (with) novel and powerful tools and strategies for service & change management to improve the way we do things, innovate our services and (sic) to sustain innovative systems by effectively leveraging the time and skills of the talent staff pools we have.”

SONAM – EA Academic Head-Kenya, Dr Ndirangu shared that STICH enabled her to think differently about innovation and how to be innovative, as well as the particular skill set she needed to work on in order to be an effective innovator. She further added that the conference enabled her to expand her network while inspiring her to think differently about business models and strategic change management.

Her colleague from Tanzania, Dr Mbekenga said, “[The] Strategic innovation for Community Health program provided an opportunity for me to gain insights and skills on how to pro-actively and systematically develop new ideas and become innovative as a leader in Health education industry. The INSEAD facilitators encouraged us to think about ‘health care’ in new ways that keep at the center, the value for our customers and the community we serve. Using real life examples during the sessions enhanced learning and understanding of the concepts, made the sessions very interesting and added value to the program. The insights gained from this program will help shape my teaching and leadership to influence young graduates from our university.”

Speaking on behalf JJCT, Benjamin Davies remarked on the long and fruitful relationship between the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), Aga Khan University (AKU) and JJCT, “AKDN and



From left: Dr Columba Mbekenga, Dr Eunice Ndirangu and Ms Edna Tallam



From left: Dr Columba Mbekenga, Dr Eunice Ndirangu, Mr Sisawo Konteh and Professor Sharon Brownie

JJCT have been partnering for 16 years to improve the quality of human health and so much has been achieved. Currently, several meetings are taking place between both organizations to better understand how can we continue building the capacity of front line health workers to further strengthen health systems. I got the chance to meet Dean Sharon Brownie in Nairobi who gave me a lot of insights about the challenges and opportunities for nurses and midwives in East Africa. We also had the time to explore new mechanisms to drive systemic change and how to continue (to) collaborate to address

those gaps.” JJCT avails a limited number of scholarships every year and SONAM – EA faculty and their representatives were recipients of four of these ensuring they were able to attend the programme at no cost.

With their participation in this year’s edition of STICH, the SONAM-EA academic heads are truly bringing the adage, “A stitch in time saves nine,” to life. STICH is the brainchild of JJCT and INSEAD who have committed to providing management education to healthcare professionals.

# Take a look at the big picture

## Changing perceptions in Oncology

By Yvonne Mathu and Sara Leitão

In 2016, the Aga Khan University's School of Nursing and Midwifery became the first university in Kenya to offer the Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing programme. This first-of-its-kind, 18-month programme now has two cohorts running. The programme is adapted for the Kenyan context from the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology standards and competencies for the specialist oncology nurse.

As part of a reflection assignment, Christine Osoo, a student from the second cohort, brought in a picture to share with her classmates. Christine asked her classmates what they saw in the picture, and how it relates to life and oncology.

When looking at the picture students said they saw a number of faces, with many only seeing the full picture with a closer look. Some of the students initially saw four faces, while others saw more than five.

As they reflected on the picture's parallelism with oncology, the students mentioned that there is a general misconception that cancer diagnosis is a death sentence. Most people believe that it is a rich person's disease because of an unhealthy, dietary lifestyle while others go further to share that their general idea of oncology is the administration of chemotherapy treatment.

While reflecting, the students mentioned how, after just four months of enrolling in the programme, they have now realized that oncology is much more than these perceptions portray. They confess that they have learnt there is a focus on the patient but this includes their family as well, with a broader spectrum of action, which is the hallmark of truly holistic care.



How many faces can you see?

While there is a clear need in East Africa for the training of oncology nurses, it is still seen as niche and not valued by most. One student mentioned that her institution provides a three-month therapy training programme, but her colleagues could not understand why she chose to enroll in an 18-month higher education programme instead.

Just like looking closer at the picture that Christine brought to class for reflection, helped most students see things more clearly; the students now



Cohort of oncology students

confess that the Higher Diploma in Oncology has made them see the bigger picture. They have learnt the importance of evidence-based research and/or practice, and learnt different writing styles that provide them with the skills that will lead them to thinking out of the box. This in turn has made them understand ways in which they can work and impact the health system.

The format of the programme is clearly valued by the students and has exceeded their expectations. They didn't imagine they could learn so much while having fun. Students have highlighted the opportunity to engage with the international community via Skype, the great balance between theory and practice and the opportunity to work in the community and witness the impact of applying their knowledge as some of the key distinguishing factors that they love about the programme.

A take home message from the students is that on completion of the programme, change starts with them. They won't wait for the institutions where they work or government to take the first step in improving the quality of care provided to oncology patients and their families.

# Theater in theatre

## A play by oncology nursing students titled "To disclose or not to disclose"

By Martie Mtange

**Intro:** Tayreez Mushani from the Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing programme attended a 4-day workshop for faculty to evaluate their course design and teaching practice by the Network of Quality, Teaching and Learning from July 25-28, 2017. She learned several things from the workshop, but what stood out was the idea of giving her students a creative assignment. Ms Mushani put her own learning into practice and gave her students the challenge of figuring out how to present their assignment creatively. This is how "To disclose or not to disclose" was born, literally. The play was written largely by Immaculate Wambugu with input from her fellow students and was presented on November 22, 2017 at the Aga Khan University Hospital lecture theatre. The hall was packed; some spectators even witnessed this rare treat from outside the theatre.

There's nothing as terrifying as going to hospital. I personally find it difficult to trust anybody who says that they actually enjoy going to hospital; what is there to enjoy? Needles, crying babies, the anticipation of bad news, the sight of blood or the whiff of antiseptic that follows you everywhere you go?

However, I feel that the hospital is absolutely important. It's the place where we confront our mortality and fragility. It's the first point of contact with the outside world for our delicate neonates and whenever our bodies break down, this is the first place we go to... after Google.

Any time we go to the hospital, we expect the doctors and nurses to find out what's wrong with us, tell us the problem in a way we understand and provide a solution that will get us healthy again. The dilemma begins when the doctor doesn't tell us what's wrong, but starts preparing us for procedures that we don't

know about and whose consequences we remain unaware of. Imagine going to hospital, then after the doctor examines your vitals, starts strapping on gloves and preparing the operating table without telling you anything. What would go through your head? What happens when a healthcare practitioner provides vital information to the wrong party first? What happens when a patient is due for treatment but does not know what the treatment is for or what the specific procedures will entail? What happens when a patient gives uninformed consent?

Mama Mary\*(not her real name) was taken to the clinic after complaining of a stomachache. A physician, who investigated what the problem was, attended to her and eventually, it was time for Mama Mary to receive her test results back. Since she was an elderly woman, her children were asked to bring her to receive the results. However, they did not want to receive the results with

their mother; therefore, they went to the physician without Mama Mary, the actual patient.

The persistent children managed to pressure the physician into disclosing what the problem was and he succumbed, informing them that they needed to see an oncologist because the diagnosis was now in the oncologist's hands. The children, however, did not want their mother to visit the oncologist so they went by themselves. After being forced to reveal what the problem was, the oncologist broke the sad news to the family that Mama Mary had gastric cancer.

Upon finding out that their mother had gastric cancer, they were agitated and began quarreling amongst themselves about whether or not to tell their mother that she had cancer. They couldn't bring themselves to do it.

Inevitably, the first day of treatment came,



Winfred Mureithi and Julius Matano on stage arguing with their brother about their mother's cancer diagnosis

and Mama Mary still thought that she only had a stomach-ulcer problem. She was seated in a room inside a cancer center, in line for chemotherapy treatment. She sat alongside fellow patients who were talking about their own experiences and discussing how far along the treatment they were. After some time, one of the nosy neighbors upon noticing how quiet she was turned to her and asked,

“How about you? What kind of cancer do you have?”

A bit shocked, Mama Mary replied, “No, I don’t have cancer!”

The nosy neighbor then asked her, confused, “So then what are you doing here?”

“I’m coming for stomach treatment”

“But look, this is a cancer center”

The nosy neighbor confirmed with the nurse in the unit that this was in fact a cancer center. Mama Mary became visibly stressed and argued with her children after they returned from a walk around the compound. Mama Mary started screaming at her children asking them why they lied to her and insisted that she did not raise them to be liars. Eventually Mama Mary refused any treatment or medication; therefore, prompting the question, was it better to disclose or not?

After the play, the students and audience gave some feedback concerning the lessons to be derived from the play and the one line that kept on surfacing was that:

“The patient is key”.

Julius Matano, one of the actors, further shared that, “Whenever you’re dealing with clients, even if they come with friends or relatives, the patient comes first.” So Mama Mary should’ve been the first person to who (sic) the news should’ve been broken to. Joyce M., also a student, made her contribution by saying that the only time there is an exception to this rule is in a situation where the patient is under 18 years of age or is mentally disabled.

*So what happens when the wrong party gets the right information first?*



From left: Tayreez Mushani with oncology students who acted in the play



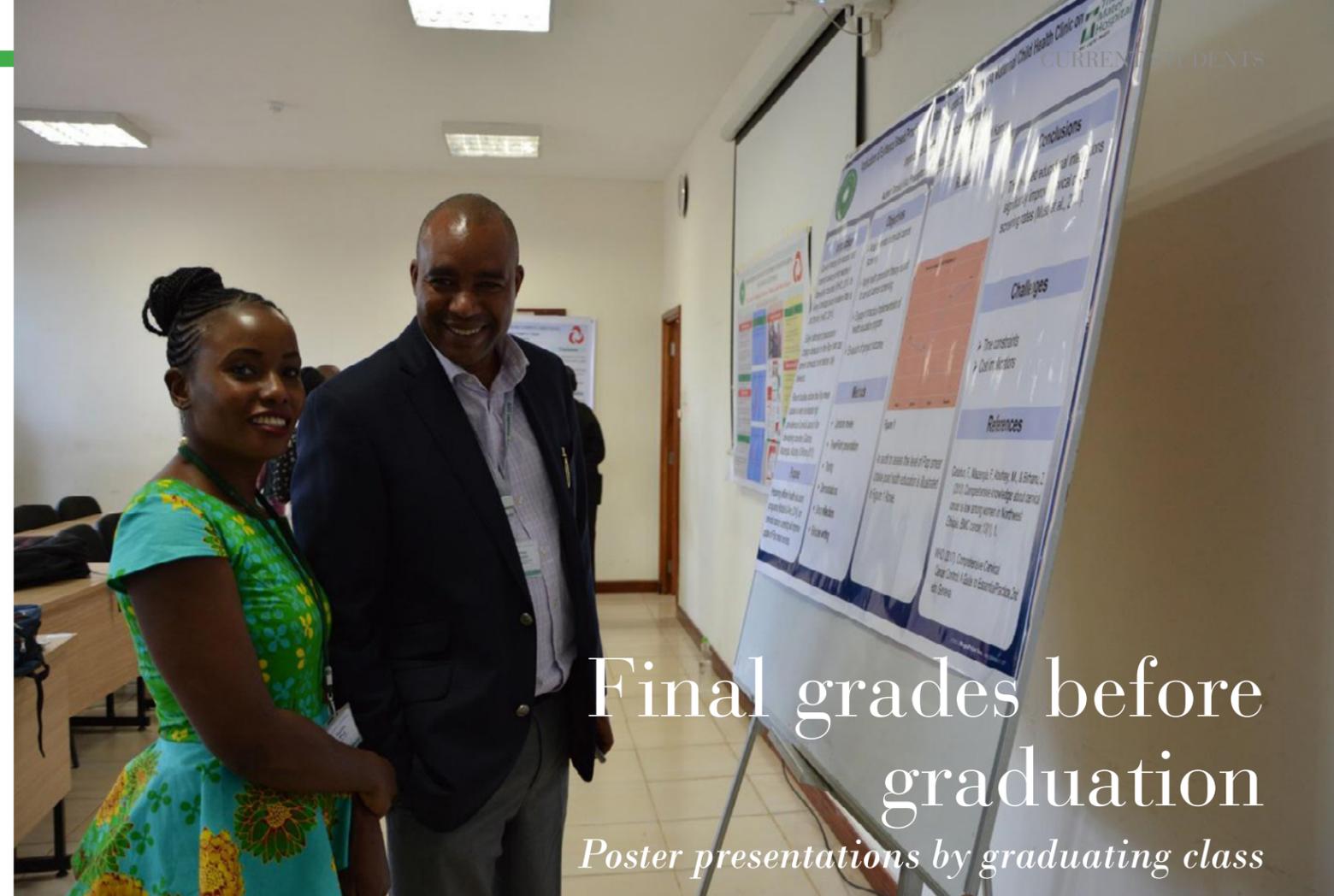
From right to left: Professor Sharon Brownie (Dean, SONAM – EA), Sara Leitão (Johnson and Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust Secondee) and Yvonne Mathu (Executive Officer, SONAM – EA) watching the play onstage

“As healthcare workers, we have an obligation to give the right information to the right people. All healthcare workers whether doctors or nurses, are guided by the same principles. So if one person along the chain of healthcare professionals makes a mistake, then it affects everyone else in the chain.” Julius Matano answered, comprehensively.

*What about the pressure to reveal by others?*

“As much as there’s pressure and as a

healthcare worker you end up giving information to the wrong party, the patient is still key, and if you do not follow that protocol, there will be a lot of chaos further down the line as was witnessed in the play.” The patient is key.



## Final grades before graduation

### Poster presentations by graduating class

*Daniela Kisia taking AKU regional librarian Peter Gatiti through her poster presentation*

*By Martie Mtange*

It’s the middle of the day, and your day has been relatively routine and quiet, just making the usual rounds checking in on patients, making sure everyone is all right. Then an emergency case lands during your shift: it’s a child, and everything is moving fast all of a sudden, people are throwing all kinds of instruments and instructions your way. The Emergency Response Team has sprung into action as you hear a mother wailing somewhere in the background, screaming for her son.

“What’s the situation?” you ask.

“Traumatic brain injury. Two year old boy fell from the fourth floor of his family’s apartment and landed head-first on the ground floor.”

Immediately you realize that it’s a paediatric trauma situation, and any move from everyone at this point is absolutely crucial. If anyone so much as touches the child’s

head the wrong way, it could spell long-term paralysis or even death.

“Unfortunately, the boy died.” Anthony Ndung’u, a student from the graduating class says solemnly while remembering the tragic day. What could have been done differently? “Well, had they immobilized his neck, they would have prevented further injuries... there were skull fractures and injuries to the brain. In that situation you’re supposed to support the airway and the breathing system... Such things weren’t managed as they were supposed to be.” This was why Anthony’s poster presentation was on, *Enhancing knowledge of paediatric trauma to improve current practice*. He carried out Continuous Medical Education sessions for nurses at AKUH-Nairobi Pediatric Accidents and Emergencies section, informed by his two-year experience there, and presented his findings for his poster presentation.

According to BScN coordinator Gladys Mbutia, students’ hands-on experience was part of the motivation for her



Mary Wanza trying to convince Dr Eunice Ndirangu that she in fact, does deserve full marks

setting up the entire exercise. “The course itself is called electives. The electives course is designed such that it is a student-led project. The course requires the student to identify an area of gap in their place of work in something that needs improvement. Once they identify that area of gap, they come up with a plan of how to resolve that gap.” The poster presentations were held in a lecture room on the second floor at SONAM – EA and were carried out in two rounds of 90 minutes each. The reason for this was because “last year we also had poster presentations but everyone had to stand at the front and talk about their projects. We found that this took too much time and people lost interest and got distracted. So what we decided this time was to do a gallery-type of poster presentations where every person will have an audience and explain to them. It’s also a chance to teach the students skills on how to do a presentation, for example if you’re in a conference and you have to explain yourself: how do you go about selling your idea to other people?” noted Gladys. The room was full of both faculty and visitors from other departments, some of whom had limited knowledge on matters to do with nursing, including yours truly, as part of the test to see how the students would fare in explaining their projects to outsiders.

The projects lasted 16 weeks. This is quite a long time, meaning that challenges were inevitable. Daniela Kisia shared that despite facing challenges, none of them stopped her from accomplishing her study on, *Application of evidence-based practice on health education to mothers at maternal child health clinic on importance of cervical*

*cancer screening* at the Mater Hospital. “With the training, you have to coordinate resources and you have to look for the training materials. So I had to make a PowerPoint presentation, get an LCD projector and prepare the content on the presentation. You have to look for a venue where the training will be done and work with the nurses to schedule when you want to do it and when they can avail themselves” Daniela said about carrying out the project. She added “If you want to do the training in the morning, clinic starts at 8a.m. You can’t start the training at 8a.m. yet clients are out there waiting. So the nurses have to come earlier, and you have to persuade them to come earlier for the hour-long training... I had to provide breakfast in the morning which came from my own pocket.”

Samwel Gatimu, a research assistant at SONAM noted that such poster presentations were quite effective. As a neutral party, he was able to observe that as a nurse, “You are able to identify the problems and the gaps in the health center because you work there. So you’re able to identify a problem, find a solution and implement it.” He added that it is definitely easier and more effective to carry out a research study and immediately work towards implementing it at your actual workplace than carrying out a research study in one’s area of interest without actually having the advantage of prior work experience, which is what most of the other universities do. With this exercise, the students not only learned research skills but also problem-solving skills that they will carry to their various workplaces, ready to make a positive impact.

# Looking to the future with a walk down memory lane

## Reconnecting with our Zanzibari Alumni

By Nepurko Keiwua

Strengthening connections with alumni is a top priority for SONAM- EA. The school in partnership with the University Office of Alumni Affairs decided to embark on an ambitious photographic essay project of the Zanzibari alumni at their various workstations. Following receipt of required research and ethics clearances, the project team met in Zanzibar to formally launch the initiative that will be replicated across Kenya, Uganda and mainland Tanzania.

The project is possible because of a unique collaboration across AKDN agencies including AKDN office in London, Registrar and Alumni Affairs office in Karachi, SONAM team in Tanzania and Dean’s office in Nairobi. Other supporting stakeholders include Sara Leitão of JJCT, Amina Abdulkadir and Yvonne Mathu who worked tirelessly to obtain all of the ethics clearances and hospital access letters needed to enable the project to proceed. Special thanks is offered to Matt Reed, CEO of the AKDN office in London who so generously released Christopher Wilton-Steer for three weeks to undertake the photographic work for this project.



The lead team supporting the alumni project from left: Abdul Haq Wahedna (Director, Alumni Affairs), Dr Eunice Siaty-Pallangyo (Senior Faculty, SONAM – Tanzania), Professor Sharon Brownie (Dean, SONAM – EA), Sara Leitão (Seconded, Johnson and Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust) and Christopher Wilton-Steer (Senior Communications Manager, Aga Khan Foundation).

Christopher stressed the importance of this exercise as a great motivator for the alumni, faculty and current students alike and added, “For the alumni it was a boost to see their alma mater show interest in them and their career progress, and in this case, celebrate the work that they do. It’s motivating for faculty to see how their former students are impacting people’s lives every day and where their careers have gone, from the frontline to the ministries of health. It’s motivating for current students to see the same and to dream of where their studies will take them in the future. Furthermore, donors are motivated to see the amazing work made possible as a result of their support and this should hopefully inspire them to continue their support of AKU.”

Christopher indicated that he was particularly privileged to observe one of our alumni, nurse Ramla at the Mnazi Mmoja hospital in Stone Town. He noted that she wouldn’t let him take a portrait of her in theatre but instead gathered her colleagues so he could take a picture of them as she said that the team’s success was shared and not individual.

Abdul Haq Wahedna, the Director of Alumni Affairs had this to say about his experience interacting with the alumni,



Nurse Ramla attends to one of her patients as Christopher clicks away

“As I witnessed on the beautiful island of Zanzibar, our nursing alumni continue to contribute in significant roles and at the highest levels, particularly in public health settings, which are almost always resource-constricted.

They openly and joyfully credit their education and development at the Aga Khan University as having given them the knowledge, skills and confidence to make the kind of differences they are making in professional capacities. The very exercise in Zanzibar, in partnership with AKU School of Nursing and Midwifery in East Africa, is designed to project alumni leaders in their everyday surroundings and workplaces, as a way of highlighting their vital contributions and celebrating their collective impact.”

Dr Eunice Siaty-Pallangyo was responsible for interviewing alumni, and was able to interact more deeply with them as they went about their day-to-day work. She noted that most of them frequently referred to the courses and mode of delivery at AKU as having immensely built their knowledge, confidence and capacity to work independently as problem solvers. She further added that the translation of knowledge is obvious in their current practice and is reflected in their future plans.

SONAM – EA aims to have the result of this alumnus photographic essay study published in a coffee table book highlighting the achievements of Zanzibar-based alumni in nursing and healthcare. Reporting the various stories and experiences of our alumni as they impact healthcare policy and practice, and documenting their work in communities is an important feedback loop to ongoing quality improvement of SONAM programmes.

Eunice further noted that, “The feedback by alumni is crucial for strengthening the curriculum; content, implementation and teaching in general.” She recalled that most alumni she interacted with credited their time at SONAM as having helped them work better in the communities in which they operate.



Sara Leitão and Dr Eunice Siaty-Pallangyo gleaming with joy



Christopher doing what he does best



Christopher at it again



Eunice, Sara and Abdul dressed for the occasion



Christopher can't hide his excitement



Members of the project team with SONAM Alumni in Zanzibar

# Caring about our children

## Poster Presentation: 2nd International Conference on Early Childhood Development

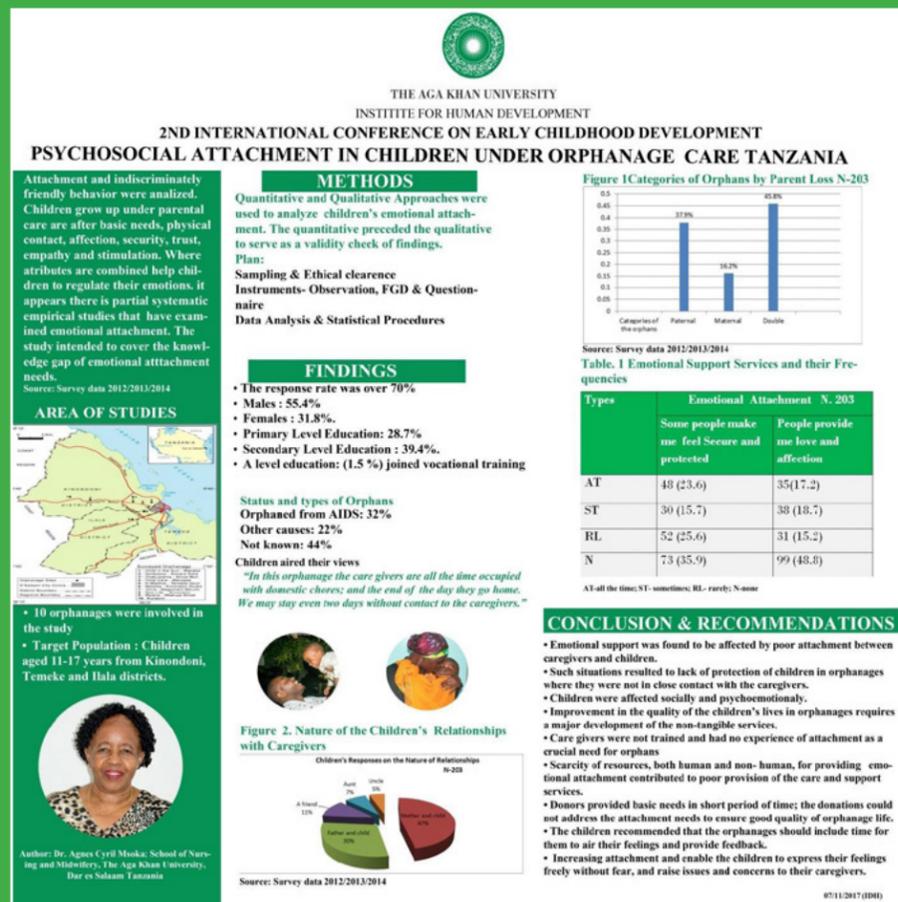
By Martie Mtange

The Institute for Human Development (IHD) hosted its 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on November 7-9, 2017 at the Serena Hotel in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The theme of the conference was, *Early childhood development in uncertain times: from awareness and evidence to commitment and action.*

The purpose of the conference was informed by a growing need to recognize the importance of early childhood development in a world that is becoming more diverse and full of challenges. IHD hosts the conferences as an ongoing commitment to address obstacles related to early childhood development. This is done with an eye for establishing policies that will fortify and enrich the foundations and experiences of children. The conference entailed several speech presentations, symposia and poster presentations regarding the featured theme.

One of our own from the Tanzania faculty, Dr Agnes Msoka, had her poster presentation accepted. It was titled, *Psychosocial Attachment in Children under Orphanage Care Tanzania*. She showcased her study, which aimed to understand the knowledge gaps of emotional attachment among orphaned children.

In summary, Dr Msoka employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey



Dr Agnes Msoka's poster presentation

to collect data from orphanages. She then utilized simple random sampling to select ten orphanages where 203 children were included in the study. Data was collected through guiding points and self-administered questionnaires.

The results of the study uncovered that the children responded on lack

of, protection and security at 35.9% as well as love and affection at 48.8%. The findings indicate low levels of care and affection due to shortage of caregivers. Dr Msoka recommends an improvement in orphans' quality of life by increasing psychosocial attachment and allowing children to express their feelings without fear, to their caregivers.

# Convention in Indianapolis

## Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing 44th Biennial Convention

By Martie Mtange

Dr Eunice Ndirangu and Gladys Mbuthia, Academic Head and Bachelor of Nursing Program Coordinator respectively, attended the Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) Honor Society of Nursing's 44<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention in Indianapolis, USA. They represented oral presentations in the area of *Registered Nurse Turnover: Lessons Learnt from Organizational Culture in Select Private Hospitals in Kenya* by Gladys and *Normalization Discourse in the Practice of Provider -initiated Counseling and Testing for HIV in Kenya* by Eunice.

The two representatives from the Kenya faculty were among the over 800 expected nursing leaders, educators and practitioners who were attending the Indiana convention for five days between October 28 and November 1, 2017. The theme of the convention was, *Influence through action: Advancing global health, nursing and midwifery*, and involved more than 1,000 oral presentations, symposia, and poster presentations detailing the latest clinical innovations, critical research projects, and important nursing leadership initiatives.

The convention provided opportunities to discuss how nurses:

- campaign for and lead inter-professional reforms to enhance and influence global health and health policy
- stimulate knowledge transformation and lifelong learning both within practice and education
- develop scholarly and philanthropic cooperation among nurses in practice, education, and research globally

STTI is the only international nursing honor society that involves a global community of nurse leaders belonging

to 500 chapters who live in more than 90 countries. From the African continent,



Gladys Mbuthia presenting her research work



Dr Eunice Ndirangu at a past poster presentation

there were delegations that came from Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, among others who attended the convention as well as the award ceremonies that punctuated the fun-side of the convention.

Gladys shares that this convention was memorable for her particularly because she got to present her own research work in front of other nursing experts as well as network with nurse researchers to increase her knowledge-base and get to know more of what her peers are working on. She goes on to say that the convention was an important platform to showcase the research and innovations going on in both developing and developed countries. Gladys concludes with her observation that, "It is important to tell people what nurses in Africa are doing. People were eager to hear from us about what is happening in developing countries." Over the years, research activity by AKU faculty has increased, and this is positive reinforcement that these efforts need to continue, with even more vigor.

# Is research important for nurses and midwives?

## Research capacity-building workshop in Zanzibar

By Sara Leifão

The research capacity-building workshop held in Zanzibar for nurses and midwives reinforced that research is definitely vital in these fields.

### What happened?

Professor Sharon Brownie, the Dean at the School of Nursing and Midwifery for East Africa (SONAM – EA) and Dr Eunice Siaty-Pallangyo (Tanzania faculty) ran a workshop with nearly 100 nurses and midwives, focusing on why research is important and the role of nurses and midwives, key topics about research and how to conduct it,

and most importantly, how to develop research questions.

The workshop is part of the Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Associations in East Africa project, an initiative that involves a partnership between Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust (JJCCT) as well as SONAM – EA in conjunction with the Zanzibar Nurses Association (ZANA) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (ZNMC).

The need to enhance the nurses and midwives' skills and knowledge in research was identified as a priority by both ZANA and ZNMC. This is a key area particularly

because the collection of data and its publication can:

- be a strong source of information about the country's health system
- provide a contextually relevant evidence-base for health care delivery and planning
- identify needs and gaps within the healthcare sector
- illustrate the success of programs and projects run by nurses and midwives. This can ultimately be used to influence policy or help healthcare resource allocation

During the workshop, the participants held group-discussions and developed research questions relevant to the health system and nursing and midwifery care in Zanzibar. Professor Brownie and Dr Siaty-Pallangyo consulted with participants to select one research question to work on during the coming year.

### Why is this important?

The goal is to mentor a group of six to ten people through the research process including development of a formal research proposal, application for ethics approval, data gathering, analysis, write-up and publication

These members will then continue to work with other nurses/midwives on other priority research questions that were identified during the workshop. This ripple effect will enable mentoring and coaching of more people on how to conduct evidence-based nursing and midwifery research in Zanzibar.



Professor Sharon Brownie with one of the nurses and midwives' groups working on research questions that are priority for Zanzibar's health system.



Dr Eunice Siaty-Pallangyo discussing how to design a research question with nurses and midwives.



Professor Sharon Brownie and Dr Eunice Siaty-Pallangyo introducing concepts of research in nursing and midwifery

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# Bringing AQCESS to Mozambique

## Strengthening healthcare access and improving nursing training

By Nepurko Keiwua

In early September, Dean Sharon Brownie and Professor Constance Shumba (Global Advisor, Health at the Aga Khan Foundation, an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network- AKDN) visited the Pemba School of Nursing in the Cabo Delgado District, Mozambique.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM) is engaged as part of the Access to Quality Care through Extending and Strengthening Health Systems (AQCESS) project. SONAM is contracted to provide curriculum and faculty development support to the Pemba Nursing School. The initiative is funded by Global Affairs Canada through the Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) with SONAM as one of the implementing partner agencies within the Aga Khan Development Network.

SONAM's involvement under AQCESS stems from the fact that the project is supporting the Pemba School of Nursing to train an additional 55 maternal and child health (MCH) nurses to address the shortage of MCH nurses in the Cabo Delgado District. AQCESS is designed with the specific aim to improve delivery of essential maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) services and improving utilization of essential MNCH services by communities. SONAM will also work with Pemba nursing faculty to enhance the development and delivery of a competency-based nursing curriculum (CBNC) for the MCH nurses in training.



Professor Constance Shumba and Mozambique-based AKDN Project Manager, Dr Egas Simbine viewing curriculum materials with faculty at the Pemba School of Nursing.

The visit of Dean Brownie and Professor Shumba commenced a faculty training needs analysis process in areas such as development and CBNC and contemporary teaching methods. Development of clinical assessment processes and preceptor training was also noted as important. Pemba Nursing School may also send members of their nursing faculty to SONAM's Dar es Salaam campus for training and development purposes. The expected outcomes of this exercise include improvement of staff capacity at the Pemba Nursing School to deliver the CBNC and improve students' in training clinical experience and post training internship. Language differences are a significant challenge as the faculty from the Pemba School of Nursing and Midwifery speak, write and teach in Portuguese. Thus, identifying Portuguese speaking nursing education experts is important to providing the best possible support to the team at the Pemba School of Nursing.



Dean Sharon Brownie and Professor Constance Shumba during their visit with the AKDN project team and faculty at Pemba School of Nursing

# Scaling up nursing education in Egypt

## Delivering competency-based curriculum in nursing education

By Nepurko Keiwua

In July and October, 2017 Aga Khan University's School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM – EA) was involved in delivering workshops to the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU) and Education Development Fund (EDF) in Cairo and for nurse educators at the Faculty of Nursing at Aswan University on the application of competency-based curriculum in nursing education.

The need for these workshops arose when the Egyptian National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (NAQAAE) confirmed in April 2017 that the national curricula for nursing must be competency-based. The competency domains were developed by NAQAAE in partnership with the Nursing Sector Group of the Supreme Council of Universities. Following endorsement, they were published as the National Academic Reference Standards (NARS) inclusive of the following five domains:

1. Ethics and professionalism
2. Holistic care
3. Management and leadership
4. Nursing informatics and technology
5. Inter-professional education

On July 16, 2017, The Helwan University Faculty of Nursing hosted facilitators and SCU representatives, that included 53 faculty from 26 universities, together with senior leadership of the NAQAAE, Nursing Sector Committee, the Assistant to the Minister of Higher Education and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, Nursing Specialty, to a one-day workshop in Cairo. The aim of this workshop was for participants to gain a common understanding of competency-based curriculum (CBC), global standards in nursing, national competencies for nursing education, and models against which universities could build entity-specific CBC.

Various delivery methods were used at the workshops, including in-depth discussions, curriculum alignment with NARS and interactive group discussions on the resources needed to progress with CBC, faculty requirements for CBC, and how to identify components of the nursing curriculum based on NARS competencies, with consideration of the specific contexts of their universities. They also covered the various aspects of CBC in nursing, such as theoretical underpinnings, constructive alignment,



From left: Assistant Professor Nabeel Al-Yateem (University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates), Professor Charles Docherty (Director, Centre for Innovation in Medical Education, AKU – Karachi), Associate Professor Rachel Rossiter (School of Nursing, Midwifery & Indigenous Health, Charles Sturt University, Australia) and Professor Sharon Brownie (Dean, SONAM – EA)

mapping competencies, and balancing theory with practice.

From July 17-20, 2017 SONAM – EA facilitated another CBC workshop for the Education Development Fund (EDF), a Prime Ministerial body committed to improving technical education in Aswan. The workshop was held in the context of the recent launch of a four-year project developed under the EDF to develop, pilot, and implement a CBC for technical nurses in Egypt. Thus, while the aim of this workshop was similar to the one held with SCU, this one was more focused on technical-level nursing education. The objectives were to develop a clear understanding of CBC and global standards in the field, agree on key competencies for technical level nursing education and

work towards developing a new pilot curriculum for technical nurses.

The week involved a productive exercise in dialogue and sharing best practices in curriculum development and how best to support local nurse educators and higher education leaders in revising nursing education delivery for Egypt. Conveners of the EDF have expressed a desire to engage SONAM – EA and partner experts in the technical level project ongoing and discussions are underway regarding how this may be achieved.

Follow-up workshops were then held in October for the Faculty of Nursing at Aswan University. This initiative is supported by Global Affairs Canada. Professor Rachel Rossiter who was involved in the provision of technical expertise in leading the training team, had this to say about her experience at the workshops, “Spending two weeks with the lecturers and instructors from the Faculty of Nursing, Aswan University was a shared learning experience as we worked to build an understanding of how the theoretical knowledge that students currently learn can be deeply embedded into safe and competent clinical practice. Again and again, we needed to consider that the overall goal is to graduate nurses equipped to provide evidence-based nursing care for the community in which they live and work.”

One of the workshop participants, Asmaa Abozied summed up her experience thus, “How will I change my teaching that will give students the chance to think more? Here we are, looking at our programme and our students need a little more of theory and much more practice. If you want

to be competent, you need knowledge, attitude, skill and practice. Remember you must go from known to unknown in teaching your students (Vygotsky).”



Two newly appointed instructors - Sabreen Yousef Awad and Asmaa Abozied with Professor Rachel Rossiter (middle)



The graduation of the third conference workshop held in October 2017 at Aswan.



Professor Amal Negam (Dean Faculty of Nursing in Aswan) with Professor Sharon Brownie (Dean SONAM EA)



These are the academic teaching and delivery team for the four-day workshop in Aswan. From left: Associate Professor Rachel Rossiter (Charles Sturt University, Australia), Dr Nabeel Al-Yateem (Sharjah University, United Arab Emirates), Professor Charles Docherty (Director, Centre for Innovation in Medical Education, AKU – Karachi) Professor Mohamed Gadallah (Egyptian Educational Development Fund, Cairo), Dr Sayd Saad (Egyptian Educational Development Fund, Cairo) and Professor Sharon Brownie (Dean, SONAM – EA)

## “Retirement... doing nothing without worrying about being caught at it”

*AKU Kenya Dinner saying goodbye to faculty*



Dr Robert Armstrong (Dean of Medical College, East Africa) and Dr Eunice Ndirangu (Academic Head of SONAM – Kenya) presenting an award to Mr James Mwenda (former Assistant Professor of Community Health).

*By Martie Mtange*

It’s never easy to say goodbye, especially when you’re not ready. Mr James Mwenda didn’t expect to be saying goodbye to AKU so soon, but it’s been about a year since he did. The dinner hosted by the Deans and Directors of AKU on November 15, 2017 was in honor of retiring and new faculty.

During his speech, James disclosed that he had been battling with a cervical spine problem which he attributed to long hours spent working on his laptop. “Due to the said cervical spine problem, a full-time teaching career

was no longer an option for me.” He went on to reassure the audience that he actively engages in exercise routines, community development and securing his ticket to heaven through religious involvement in the church.

Regarding Professor Sharon Brownie, he shared that she “... joined the SONAM team during my last (sic) year at AKU... During the short time under her leadership it was clear to me that AKU-SONAM had been joined by a visionary and progressive team leader who embraced AKU’s core principles of quality, relevance, impact and access with passion. It

was unfortunate that I had to leave before I saw the full realization of her vision, especially her goal of having well prepared faculty...”

James attributed most of his success and strength to his wife Mary whom he relied on for prayer, love, encouragement and support. To James, we say farewell, and wish you the best. SONAM would also like to bid a farewell to Martha Loeffler who retired in June 2017.

“Retirement is wonderful. It is doing nothing without worrying about being caught at it.” – Gene Garrett

# Brave goodbyes

## *Sara Leitão completes her secondment*

By *Nepurko Keiwua*

Paulo Coelho once said, “If you’re brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello.” Let’s wish Sara Leitão a brave goodbye as she says a new hello to an even braver experience having interacted with us here at the School of Nursing and Midwifery – East Africa (SONAM – EA). Although Sara’s time here has come to an end, she leaves after a fruitful and eye opening six months working as the 2017 Johnson and Johnson Corporate Citizen Trust (JJCT) secondee.

I had a short chat with Sara about her work as Medical Education and Scientific Relations Lead at Janssen EMEA (J&J), her role here at SONAM – EA and her most memorable moments while working on the “Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Associations” project representing JJCT in partnership with the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

Sara gave me some insight into the secondment program at JJCT that involves placing high value and highly skilled resources in the areas where they are needed most. The “Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Associations” project has been running for the past four years with the aim of positively impacting healthcare systems and outcomes in the region. The previous secondees were involved in mapping out the scope, needs and strategic plan of action for the project while Sara’s immediate predecessor worked on delivering marketing and communications workshops to enable associations create workable marketing and communication plans. Sara was greatly impacted by the project as she was able to do meaningful work in strengthening local associations while gaining very nuanced lessons from her cultural interactions across East Africa.

Sara arrived in July faced with the task of working on business planning and organizational sustainability. For that, she wanted to create a framework that could last even after the JJCT and AKDN partnership is completed to ensure the long term impact of the project and the

sustainability of the associations.

During her first month here, Sara was able to discover that the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) had one such framework governing its engagement with civil society. With some tweaks and adaptations to the nursing/midwifery and healthcare sector, Sara was able to avail the framework to support the project’s goals. This is a prime example of how wonderful cross-agency and interdepartmental synergies are boosted by creating open communication channels.

Sara was privileged enough to join all SONAM – EA staff at a faculty retreat and it is here that she noticed for the first time the amazing group of people who make Aga Khan University and the dearth of skills readily available. One of her insights has to do with the capacity perceptions gap, “There is a perceptions gap as to the capacity that is available in Africa. Sometimes, we don’t come to work here because there is no one available or skilled enough to do the job. We come here to provide a fresh eye, a fresh way of doing things that is quite different from the norm, and an extra resource called time.” She added that SONAM – EA management is aware of this and is working steadily to create awareness of the various skills and talents that staff have to offer, and even develop them further.

When I asked her what struck her the most about her experience working in East Africa, she reflected that, “People are genuinely interested, happy with a ready smile to help you no matter how bad their day might have been.” She continued to say that her interactions with the various associations showed her that people were eager to learn more on how to improve their associations, which is the core objective of the project. She was also



grateful to all the SONAM-EA academic heads, faculty and staff, who she noted were all keen to help wherever they could despite their busy schedules. Sara added that “The team I have been privileged to work with at AKU and AKF is truly inspirational! Also, seeing the impact the project has on the associations makes you want to run the extra mile for it!”

Overall she says working in East Africa as the JJCT secondee for the past six months has opened up her mindset because when you get the chance to work in a different environment outside your area of expertise you get to learn and open up resources outside your comfort zone. Sara asserts that she will take the skills she improved and developed back to her current role at Janssen EMEA, like new and innovative ways of disseminating knowledge and information via workshops and excellent teaching/research frameworks.

Conversely, SONAM – EA would like to thank Sara Leitão for her willingness to teach and share knowledge that takes us a step further to strengthening nursing and midwifery associations across East Africa.

*Até breve Sara!*



**THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY**

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