

# SONAM NEWS

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



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

## Message from the Dean

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

It is my pleasure to welcome you all back from your well-deserved Christmas and New Year break. It was good to see you all returned much refreshed after the break.

In this New Year, we already have cause for celebration. SONAM-Kenya received approval to offer the Bachelor of Science in Midwifery (BScM) programme in Kenya. This is wonderful news for mothers and babies as we work towards preparing and graduating skilled midwives who can contribute to lowering the maternal and infant mortality rates countrywide. I offer my deepest and sincere thanks to everyone who was involved in ensuring that the BScM programme became a reality in Kenya.

Excitement has been felt across our SONAM regions and communities as we have graduated the first BScM class in Uganda. The group are already making impact. Three of the BScM graduates: Jailah Namutebi, Hanifah Nakanwagi and Leila Naluyima, teamed up with Professor Grace Edwards to prepare an article that was published in the January 2018 issue of *Practising Midwife*. Congratulations to them! In addition to this, Uganda's midwives were granted free subscription to the All4Maternity platform as well as access to the *Practising Midwife*, a peer reviewed journal that caters to the global midwifery community.

2018 has already started well for the



midwifery profession globally as the publication follows a recent conference organized by the Midwives Association in Kenya. Hellen, from the Uganda faculty and six of her students were invited to present their research studies during the conference, and it was a first-time trip to Nairobi for many of them. As we closed off 2017, I mentioned that measurable, incremental successes were going to propel SONAM to the next level. Indeed, before the year rounded to a close, Tayreez Mushani was invited to the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital's Training Centre to witness the first cohort of Oncology Nurses graduate from SONAM's sister site. Shortly thereafter, SONAM's oncology nurses joined other working nurses as the first Oncology Nurses in the region during the Nairobi convocation ceremony. As I attended each of the ceremonies, I noted with immense

pride and joy that our SONAM graduates were chosen to give the valedictory addresses at each of the ceremonies. The milestone of graduating our first students from the Oncology programme was made possible by the extensive support we have received from partners such as the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto. We are pleased to include a story of the graduation and offer our sincere thanks to the collaborating partners who have made this possible. We will also check in on our faculty as they take the steps towards obtaining their PhD's in various disciplines. Last year, Diana, Isabel, Joseph, Judith and Caroline began their PhD journey at the University of Salford. Meantime, others such as Grace and Jane are well on the way to completing their programmes with the University of South Africa.

These first two months of the year have been busy with workshops, partnerships, convocations, welcoming new students and several other activities. As the year began, we said goodbye to our graduating students and hello to new ones. I would like to encourage everyone to keep working towards the goals that you have set for yourself this year, and I hope you end up achieving even more than you thought you could.

**Professor Sharon Brownie**  
Dean  
SONAM EA

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FEBRUARY 2018

# SONAM takes delivery of good news

## *Kenya campus now offers Bachelor of Science in Midwifery*

By *Nepurko Keiwua*

In early February 2018, Dean Sharon Brownie sent out a congratulatory message to all SONAM-EA staff with the good news that the Nairobi campus had been licensed to begin offering the Bachelor of Science in Midwifery (BScM) programme.

I spoke to Dr Eunice Ndirangu, SONAM Nairobi's Academic Head, who referred to the BScM as an up-skilling programme that targets registered midwives, and would be regarded as a better "...pathway for those who are passionate about midwifery to advance their education without deviating." She added that it would be an opportunity to focus on the International Confederation of Midwives competencies, as the Post RN-BScM has a greater emphasis on midwifery courses. In the past, nurses with a passion for midwifery would enrol in the Post RN-Bachelor of Science in Nursing programme as a gateway to a Master's in Midwifery.

Getting a course approved by the Commission of University Education (CUE) is no small feat. According to Dr Ndirangu, the process starts even before the curriculum itself is developed. The first step involves demonstrating a need for the programme. Maternal and child health was a key indicator of the need for the BScM, particularly as 75% of maternal deaths in Kenya are preventable. The infant and maternal mortality rates are way above the target, and as such, introducing a specialised education programme like the BScM would greatly benefit the health services sector and assist in bringing the numbers of infant and maternal deaths down.

Once the need for the programme was

established, SONAM went ahead and prepared the curriculum with input from national, regional and international experts and stakeholders. An important stakeholder is the Nursing Council of Kenya, as the curriculum is expected to meet the minimum requirements for licensing and registration set by the Council. Beyond the Council, the curriculum must also meet the laid down standards and checklists set by the CUE. Once the curriculum was developed, it then had to pass muster under the Aga Khan University's internal approval processes. This included the SONAM curriculum committee then onward to the Board of Undergraduate Studies and finally the Academic Council for approval.

At this point, the curriculum was submitted to the CUE for review and to obtain further input about factors that had to be addressed before the CUE arranged a site visit. As a result of this lengthy process, SONAM added an extra floor in 2015 to cater for the expected increase in students that the course will bring: an extended skills lab and a brand new science lab. Once the CUE is satisfied, the Council then steps in to audit the curriculum and provide input that again needs to be addressed

before they conduct their site visit. This final site visit is important, as it is at this point that the Council will approve and accredit the training facilities here at Sunny Plaza as well as the various clinical rotation sites.

As we continued to speak, Dr Ndirangu confessed that the approval of the course left her happily speechless, although she rarely ever misses something to say whatever the situation. Despite how involving the CUE site visit preparations were, with some sleepless nights, she shared that every step at which approval was received was cause for celebration.

And celebrate we shall, for all pregnant or newly-delivered Kenyan mothers and their children. The introduction of this programme is the first of its kind here in Kenya, and means that we have an opportunity to improve maternal and infant mortality rates. This also means that SONAM has a direct impact on the quality of care to which pregnant mothers, unborn children and new children will have access in the coming generations. To our Kenyan faculty, we say *Hongera* and wish them all the very best in the coming months as they work to get the BScM programme on its feet.



Senior Instructor Esther Wanjiku takes students through a maternal examination during a past BScN class



A section of BScN 2020 students listening keenly during their Science Lab Orientation

# Welcome to the Aga Khan University

## *Orientation of Bachelor of Science in Nursing, class of 2020*

*By Nepurko Keiwua*

Ahead of their February 5, 2018 reporting date, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) class of 2020 attended their on-campus orientation on January 30, 2018.

Over the next three days, the class was taken through SONAM's mission and objectives, and had a chance to meet their lecturers. The class was also given an in-depth look at their BScN course and a tour of the campus facilities here in Nairobi. They were able to visit the Science Lab run by Mr Festus Mulakoli, who gave a presentation and expertly fielded their questions.

To the class of 2020, we welcome you as you start this journey to become a better nurse.



Science Lab Technician, Mr Mulakoli delivers a presentation during the BScN Orientation



Mr Mulakoli answers questions from the class

# A PhD needs commitment, patience, persistence, thick skin and a stiff drink (coffee)

## *Faculty PhD induction at the University of Salford*

By Martie Mtange

“PhD needs commitment, patience, persistence, thick skin and a *stiff drink* (coffee)” says Diana Kassaman, after arriving home from her trip to Salford. She had just completed her induction programme, and immediately realised that a PhD is not all glamour and roses, but also hard work and strong drinks; in her case, coffee.

Joseph, Caroline, Judith, Isabel and Diana were a cohort of five from the faculty in Kenya and Uganda who were inducted into the University of Salford’s School of Health and Social Sciences programmes. The two faculty members from Kenya and three from Uganda were hosted by Professor Louise Ackers during a three-week period from November 6–24, 2017.

The five SONAM East Africa faculty members were to attend lectures related to their PhD studies, meet with supervisors and plan their PhD trajectories, orientate themselves to the university’s operations (e.g. using the library), acquaint themselves with student services and lastly, interact with other international PhD candidates. In

addition, they were taken on a tour of the beautiful campus, which is situated in one of the most historic British areas. They were informed that the School of Health and Social Sciences has a total of 120 PhD students.

Isabel from the Kenya faculty particularly appreciated “the importance of a learning agreement because it clearly spells out your objectives and the responsibilities of students and supervisors.” A learning agreement allows for transfer of learning experiences between the home and host universities with which the student is involved. Diana noted, “We left Salford with a clear understanding of how we would make significant original contributions to bodies of literature, theory, policy and practice. Overall, we understood what doctorate-ness (sic) is. The induction programme prepared us for the challenging work ahead; but with the resources and support we experienced in the three weeks, we are optimistic that we will rise to the challenge.”

Iron sharpens iron, and it comes as no surprise that more SONAM East Africa faculty are honing their skills and improving their academic qualifications. For them, it is going to be a rewarding time of ontological stances, 20-hour PhD weeks and very stiff drinks.



Isabel Kambo, Caroline Namukwaya, Diana Kassaman, Professor Louise Ackers, Judith Mutyabule and Joseph Mwizerwa

# Taking the first step in your PhD journey

## *Salford research workshop held in Uganda*

*By Nepurko Keiwua*

In November, five faculty members begun their journey in acquiring PhD's. They visited the University of Salford campus in the UK for orientation and came back to begin their individual journey.

On January 29, 2018 SONAM Uganda hosted a Research Day Workshop specifically targeting these individuals. Dinah Kassaman and Isabel Kambo from Kenya joined Judith Mutyabule, Caroline Namukwaya and Joseph Mwizerwa from Uganda at the daylong workshop. The purpose of this workshop was to provide a platform for the current and prospective candidates at SONAM EA to highlight their current PhD progress and concerns. In return, these PhD candidates were given constructive feedback from professors and recent PhD graduates that were present on the day.

Of extreme benefit was the presence of a recent PhD graduate from the University of Manchester, Mr Raymond Tweheyo. He presented his topic, highlighting the methodology used and this was then used as teaching opportunity by Professor Louise Ackers from the University of Salford's School of Health and Social Sciences. She was able to teach about research methods as Raymond presented. Each participant in the workshop also had 15 minutes to state the progress they had made on their research project with an additional five to ten minutes allocated for audience feedback. This marathon session was beneficial to everyone as as they were able to share common challenges that they were facing and those who were ahead were able to give them tips and tricks on how to face these challenges. Dinah was able to share her challenges with getting ethics approval for her project, which was good for the other four students to learn as well. Judith appreciated the organization of this workshop as she feels that it works for her benefit as novice researcher.

Isabel from Kenya said of her experience, "The workshop was a productive experience and [everyone] shared knowledge and experiences that are going to be useful for our PhD - work in progress. It was also nice to meet and interact with faculty and other professionals. I would like to say a big thank you to the Uganda team for organizing and Professor Louise Ackers for taking time to meet us and share her wisdom."

Professor Grace Edwards, senior faculty in Uganda, also said that she would work closely with Professor Ackers to ensure that SONAM's fabulous five would have as much support on this journey as possible. In future, Professor Edwards said that the next plan would be to have a summer session where Salford faculty would come over to East Africa to give fresh perspectives on the PhD. She also added that all the PhD

candidates have been added to a new Salford module, Evidence Based Practice that they can join via Zoom as they continue with their studies.



Faculty from Kenya and Uganda, Left to Right, Dinah Kassaman, Judith Mutyabule and Isabel Kambo mingle during a break during the Research Day



The research workshop participants take a break from the sessions



From left: Professor Grace Edwards, senior faculty from SONAM Uganda and Professor Louise Ackers, Chair in Social Policy at the School of Nursing, Midwifery, Social Work and Social Sciences in the University of Salford, UK

# SONAM Uganda: Now part of the global midwifery perspective

## *Free subscriptions to the All4Maternity platform for students in Uganda*

By Martie Mtange

Essentially, midwives are a small community; small to the extent that in East Africa, our Uganda campus had the first Professor of Midwifery in the region, and our Kenya campus has just launched the first Bachelor of Science in Midwifery programme in the country. This is why the granting of free subscriptions to the All4Maternity platform for over 30 midwifery students from the Uganda campus was a big deal.

All4Maternity is a platform by midwives for midwives all over the world. The platform allows midwives to connect through their experiences and access free learning

modules. The platform also allows access to *Practising Midwife*, a peer-reviewed journal that includes publications and interesting articles from the global midwifery community. Three of our students in Uganda, Jailah Namutebi, Hanifah Nakanwagi and Leila Naluyima, teamed up with Professor Grace Edwards to prepare an article that was published in the January 2018 issue of *Practising Midwife*.

Their study, 'Midwives' knowledge of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in Uganda', investigated how many midwives knew the 10 steps of successful breastfeeding outlined in the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), a programme to support the initiation of successful breastfeeding that is well known among midwives worldwide. Their study showed that only 40 per cent of the respondents

had heard of BFHI, and none could identify more than three steps of the initiative. The authors noted that it was commendable that Uganda has policy action in place to coordinate child health and nutrition; however, there are major knowledge gaps with regard to successful breastfeeding that need to be addressed.

That this study was given voice in *Practising Midwife* as an interesting piece of research highlights the interconnectedness of the midwifery community, and the prominence of SONAM in spearheading crucial conversations and posing questions that need answers. Professor Edwards has also shared that *Practising Midwife* is expanding to the African continent, and she has been approached to be a part of their editorial board; yet another first for SONAM!



Hellen Kyakuwaire instructing midwifery students during a practical session

# Enhancing student engagement

## *SONAM takes the next step in blended learning*

By *Nepurko Keiwua*

SONAM in East Africa was off to a running start as faculty in each of the campuses were trained on next step of the virtual learning environment (VLE), commonly referred to as 'Moodle', in January 2018. Moodle is a frequently used on-line learning platform.

As I sat in on the sessions, I kept remembering a quote by the Roman poet, Juvenal, "Who watches the Watchmen?" Using an on-line platform for teaching greatly increases transparency and allows multiple 'watchers of the watchmen' or the teams that develop and deliver teaching. For our faculty to remain up to date, and indeed, for SONAM to apply research and innovation in what it does, adoption of VLE for all is a must for teaching and nursing excellence. This is especially because it provides functions of online interactions with students, enables the instructors and students to administer and submit assignments online and several other benefits. Only after effectively mastering this platform can we boast that we are the best trainers of nurses in the region.

It was an-eye opening experience as I got to see the level of effort it takes to ensure the quality of courses offered online is just as good as those delivered in person. I could not help but make comparisons to an online course in which I am currently enrolled; SONAM is well on the way to actually conducting the bulk of its classes wholly online. The VLE works well for our nursing students who can only spare two days a week to be in class. SONAM Kenya, and East Africa as a whole, has taken initiative to improve the quality of teaching and learning through having all of its courses accessible through Moodle.

This next step of the implementation of the VLE is intended to introduce more interactivity within and across all SONAM East Africa courses. Nairobi's Academic Head, Dr Eunice Ndirangu, expressed her delight in having SONAM proceed to the next level after evaluation of the achievements of each campus during level 1, and said that, "We look forward to an engaging learning experience for both students and faculty."

Moodle use at level 1 involved development of course websites with a course outline, assignment schedule, list of readings, faculty contact details, calendar of classes and relevant academic policies. The idea for level 2 is to increase student interactivity on Moodle through creation of some student-engaging activities in each course. To facilitate successful and effective implementation of level 2, the TL\_Net conducted a two-day training with faculty, which involved having them actively working on the course(s) that would be offered during the February–June 2018 semester.



Edward Misava, from TL\_net, takes SONAM Nairobi faculty member, Isabel Kambo through the finer details of the Moodle system



VLE Level II training participants, including SONAM's Dean Professor Sharon Brownie, listen keenly to Khurram Iqbal from AKU in Karachi

This was followed by one-to-one sessions between faculty and trainers from the digital learning network later in February. These individualised sessions provided an avenue for continuous assessment of course enhancement as well as training opportunities where gaps in implementation might still exist. I asked one of the participants at the Nairobi training session about her experience. Instructor Eunice Atsali said, "Using Moodle platform has been the most interesting moment in my teaching. The first time I began using this method in managing my teaching seemed tedious. This has however changed over time, and especially in the second year when I am reusing some of the materials used in the previous year for teaching in communicable diseases, culture health and society and advanced nursing studies. This has made my work much easier and has given me accountability of my own teaching. In addition, there are subjects we work on together as a team; hence Moodle has offered easier collaboration among team members and accountability to the module lead. The second phase that involves more interaction with the learners is more exciting as we are able to maximise on learning. In my classes, I have added some discussions and quizzes, which help in deeper learning as well as real time evaluation of understanding. I am looking forward to other levels, as what we have engaged in with the students already is interesting."



SONAM students in Nairobi celebrate during their convocation ceremony

# SONAM graduates excel during convocation ceremonies in East Africa

## *Congratulations to the class of 2017*

*By Nepurko Keiwua*

The three Aga Khan University (AKU) campuses in East Africa were recently the sites of jubilant celebrations for graduating students and their families.

SONAM graduates did not disappoint, as each of the valedictory speeches delivered during convocation in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya was made by one of our very own. This is a testament to the will and determination of our students as

well as the culture of excellence perpetuated across our campuses.

In Kenya, Immaculate Wambugu, the class of 2017 valedictorian was also awarded best overall student as she graduated with a Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing. She says of her experience, “We all joined this university with enthusiasm to improve ourselves, determined to change our practice. The moment we begun the orientation period we realised that the kind of effort we had to put in our studies was enormous. Throughout the various courses it came to our

realisation the skills we had to learn. Long study hours became the norm, adjusting social life was not an option and teamwork was an important skill one had to acquire. The learning ‘how to think’ and asking ‘why’ is so engrained in my mind to date, such that it took several attempts just to complete writing this speech. Each one of us graduating here today holds dear special memories of skills learned. For example, the oncology cohort can attest that now they not only know how to care for cancer patients but can write a newspaper article, a play script



Irene Atim who graduates with a BScM from SONAM Uganda gives her farewell address during convocation



Immaculate Wambugu who graduated with a Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing, gives her valedictory speech in Nairobi



Sophia Sanga from SONAM Tanzania gives her valedictory speech

and even become play actors and directors.” In her closing remarks she referred to one of the plays the oncology cohort put on to teach disclosure, as shared in our last issue of the SONAM Newsletter.

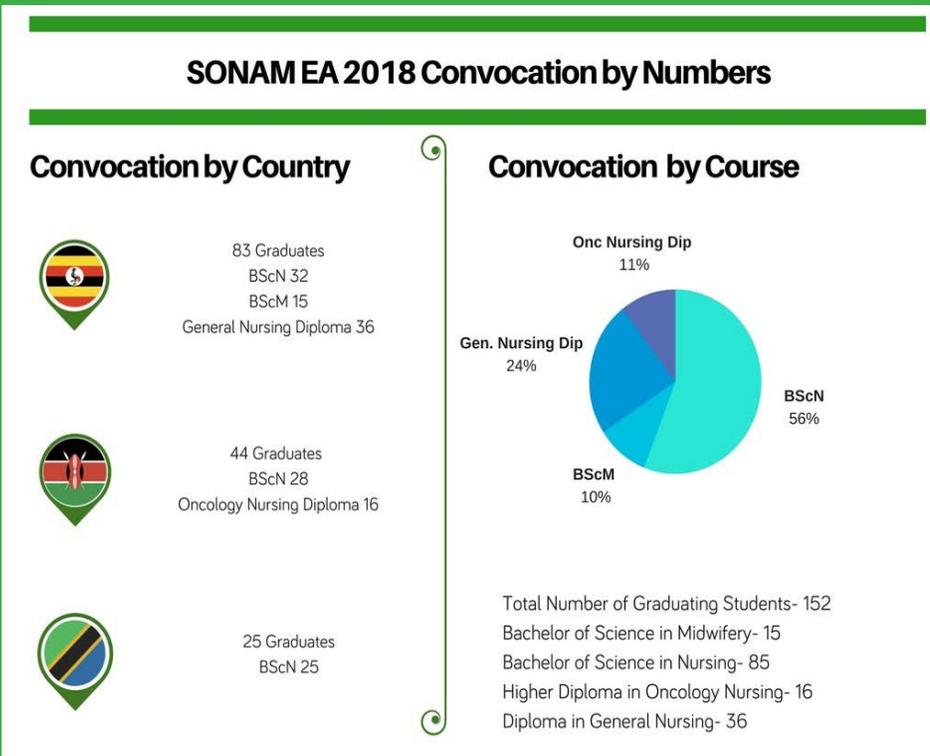
Sophia Sanga, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN), delivered the Tanzanian valedictory speech. She stated that as the AKU class of 2017, “We will secure

great positions because of the drive and vision that has been instilled in us by AKU faculty members. We also understand that our societies are eagerly waiting for our contributions to care for the sick, prevent disease, promote health and provide better education to our people.” This was a direct reference to the AKU mission, which states that it “seeks to prepare individuals for constructive and exemplary leadership roles, and shaping

public and private policies, through strength in research and excellence in education, all dedicated to providing meaningful contributions to society.”

At our sister campus in Uganda, Irene Atim, a Bachelor of Science in Midwifery (BScM) graduate referenced Henry Ford when she affirmed the continued commitment of the AKU class of 2017 to lifelong learning. She mentioned that although the path they had chosen to follow was hard, and often she and her classmates had wanted to give up, their faculty mentors and advisers gave them an extra push and made the learning process more interesting.

Each of the valedictorians shared their eye-opening experiences while studying at SONAM. It is noteworthy that all of the SONAM campuses displayed an exemplary commitment to furnishing students with access to quality nursing and midwifery education. We would like to wish all graduates every success in their future endeavours.



# Winning the war against cancer

## *Graduates shining a beacon of hope in Kenya's Oncology Nursing Field*

By Nepurko Keiwua

According to the WHO Cancer Factsheet published in 2017, cancer is the second leading cause of death globally with 8.8 million deaths attributed to this scourge in 2015. Cancer is one of the leading causes of rising mortality rates in developing countries. This has seen an increased need for specialized cancer education, nursing and medical training.

When I sat down with Tayreez Mushani, I had no idea that Oncology Nursing was a specialty available in East Africa. She came to Kenya to take up a role at the Aga Khan University Hospital as the Director of Nursing Practice until her joint appointment by the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto, Canada and Aga Khan University's School of Nursing and Midwifery (AKU – SONAM) in Nairobi in 2014. Tayreez has been the curriculum preparer, teacher and examiner all rolled into one for the Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing programme that is exclusively offered at SONAM's Nairobi Campus and the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital Training Centre (MTRHTC) in Eldoret.

In April 2016, AKU's School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM), The Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital's Training Centre (MTRHC) in Eldoret and the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto had the Higher Diploma in Oncology



Oncology Nursing Graduates from MTRHTC in Eldoret take a photo with SONAM's Tayreez Mushani



SONAM Nairobi Graduates with the SONAM EA Dean, AKU President, Board of Trustees, Chief Guest, Vice Provost and SONAM Nairobi Academic Head

Nursing approved by the Nursing Council of Kenya as a teaching course at both sites. Come December 2017, Ms Mushani got to see seven of her Eldoret oncology nursing students graduate and take their place amongst Kenya's pioneer oncology nurses.

The good news does not end here, during the most recent Aga Khan

University convocation in Nairobi, the course saw 16 more graduates join oncology nursing in February 2018.

The Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing is a stellar example of the successful private public partnerships that bring us closer to achieving some of the Kenya Vision 2030 Social Pillar objectives. It may seem

like a drop in the ocean but what are oceans but collections of many drops. In a nutshell, the health objective of the social pillar seeks to improve access to health care by 2030 through improving the quality of health service delivery to the highest standards. For this to be possible, there is an Economic Stimulus Programme that will see an increase in the recruitment of nurses to 3,886 countrywide. This brings into focus the importance of widening the scope of nursing to include specialty courses as oncology as well as enhancing job creation efforts in the health services sector.

The effort to deal with cancer is not limited to government or Kenya alone. Congratulations poured in from all corners of the globe upon receiving the news of the first cohort of AKU oncology nurses to graduate during the 2018 convocation ceremony in Nairobi. Tayreez shared congratulatory messages from the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, International Society for Nurses in Cancer Care, the Oncology Nursing Society, the American National Cancer Institute, and the African Organization for Research and Training in Cancer, the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre in New York, the Middle Eastern Cancer Consortium as well as the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology. As they feted SONAM's oncology nurses, these institutions agreed that continued work in cancer research and training is important towards growing and setting oncology patient care and nursing standards.

I asked Tayreez to share some of her memorable moments while working on the curriculum as well as teaching the first lot of students here at SONAM. She took me through a practice that she had



Valedictorian Immaculate Wambugu receives her Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing from Professor Mwenda Ntarangwi, CEO Commission for University Education at this year's convocation ceremony in Nairobi



Diana Kassaman explains a procedure during a past clinical skills lab session

initiated. Students were asked to share statements, phrases and words commonly associated with cancer and oncology care. Most of her students inevitably ended up sharing "COMPASSION". This touched her as it demonstrated their level of understanding of the cornerstone of oncology care. She was also quite happy to see that the students were already synthesizing the knowledge gained; her use of out of the box

tools to teach including setting up a play based on disclosure was a great way to teach an otherwise uncomfortable topic.

Having been an oncology nurse since 1985, Tayreez has years of experience providing care to cancer patients and their families. She has had the opportunity to learn through her work with wonderful but critically ill patients while helping

them through a difficult phase of life. When she took up her role at SONAM as curriculum developer and teacher for the Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing, there were only three oncology nurses in the country and now there are 23 more joining the profession from both sites in Kenya.

These graduates join a specialized profession where they are counted upon by patients to assist in correctly communicating on the various diagnoses as well as being expected to manage and administer the treatment. In a nutshell, oncology nurses walk with the patient just like other nurses but because of the nature of the illness, the burden of care placed on oncology nurses is much more than that of a non-specialized nurse. This brings the need for proper training in oncology nursing practice to ensure our students are ready to serve those that need them the most, into sharper focus.

Diana Kassaman, senior instructor here at Nairobi, had this to say about her experience teaching the oncology nursing class at SONAM, “It was a wonderful one and a half years teaching and preparing the inaugural Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing class. It was quite encouraging to see students who came in with almost no knowledge in oncology nursing transform to specialty nurses who challenged each other to think, speak and act like the specialists they are. They engaged in weekly reflections and as days went by, it was evident that learning was taking place. The soft skills of nursing were emphasized and the students on various occasions verbalized how AKU was transforming them into all round, culturally sensitive, compassionate nurses. One of the students actually stated, ‘I never would have



Tayreez and Oncology Nursing graduates in Eldoret cut their celebration cake together

developed my thinking the way I have if I did not come to AKU.’

During the February 14 Nairobi convocation ceremony, I was struck by the level of excellence amongst

*“The team effort in that class was unmatched; they continually reminded each other that they were not here to compete but to learn, support each other and succeed.”*

- DIANA KASSAMAN

the nursing class- SONAM graduates in each of the countries were picked to give the valedictorian speeches. In Kenya, SONAM’s Immaculate Wambugu gave the valedictory speech sharing her experience as a graduate with a Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing. In her speech, Immaculate gave an account of her time at SONAM and the eye opening education she received, “We all joined this university with enthusiasm to improve ourselves, determined to change our practice. The moment we begun the orientation period we realized that the kind of effort we had to put in our

studies was enormous. Throughout the various courses it came to our realization the skills we had to learn. Long study hours became the norm, adjusting social life was not an option and teamwork was an important skill one had to acquire... Each one of us graduating here today holds dear special memories of skills learnt.”

In parting, Tayreez fondly remembers being treated to a cake cutting with her students at the Eldoret site. They insisted on sharing the knife to cut the cake and would not proceed until everyone’s hand was on the handle. This is a testament to how close knit the team had become over the duration of the course.

She notes that, for an oncology nurse, the key to successfully helping the patients, lies in putting the knowledge and skill they acquire while in school to practice with a great attitude. She further added that, “I see the future of oncology nursing in Kenya as one of hope because I believe students are committed and they will be able to take the specialty forward.”

# SONAM Research Collaboration with KEMRI Wellcome Trust

## *Professor Brownie's visit to Oxford Brookes University*

By Martie Mtange

Professor Sharon Brownie attended a Health System Research Forum at the Green Templeton College, Oxford, on December 4–5, 2017. The two-day forum was convened by Professor Mike English of the KEMRI Wellcome Trust Research Programme and the University of Oxford. She was also joined by other nursing stakeholders from Kenya. Meetings focused on progress of the Health Services that Deliver for Newborn (HSD-N) initiative, a major research project which identified gaps in neonatal nursing care and neonatal nursing competencies. Professor English noted that HSD-N provides a platform for private and public hospital teams in Nairobi to discuss how improved standards of care can be achieved and explore the best ways to provide quality care around standardised nursing practice in new-born units.



Elizabeth Owyer, Ministry of Health, Kenya; Sharon Brownie, Aga Khan University SONAM East Africa; Edna Tallam Kimaiyo, Nursing Council of Kenya; Dorothy Agebo, Kenyatta Hospital, Nairobi

Professor Brownie was supported by a Nuffield Fellowship Travel scholarship to cover the costs of attending the forum. Regarding the opportunity, Professor Brownie

shared that, “It’s good to see major grant funding allocated to nursing projects and I look forward to continued collaboration in better defining neonatal nursing care in Kenya”

## PUBLICATIONS



### Carl Amrhein

Nielsen, C., Amrhein, C., Osornio-Vargas, A., & the DoMiNO Team. (2017). Mapping outdoor habitat and abnormally small newborns to develop an ambient health hazard index. *International Journal of Health Geographics*, 16(43), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12942-017-0117-5>



### Prof Grace Edwards

Namutebi, J., Nakanwagi, H., Naluyima, L., Edwards, G. (2018). Midwives’ knowledge of Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in Uganda. *The Practising Midwife*, pp 25-29.

Edwards, G., Kyakuwaire, H., Brownie, S. (2018). Developing a work/study programme for midwifery education in East Africa. *Midwifery*, 59, 74-77.

# Involve me and I learn

## *Manuscript-writing Workshop: University of Washington*

By *Martie Mtange*

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn”. This quote from Benjamin Franklin actually summarized the three-day workshop at the SONAM Nairobi main conference room.

The six facilitators from the University of Washington came to deliver a manuscript-writing workshop with SONAM and included Aliza Monroe-Wise, Anjuli Wagner, Anne Njoroge, Beatrice Wamuti, David Katz and Kate Wilson.

The workshop was conducted by the Department of Medicine with support from the Medical College Research Office. Members from SONAM with data ready to be turned into a manuscript submitted their work and the best abstracts were picked, so that the writers involved could participate in the workshop. One of these writers was Dr Agnes Msoka who came all the way from the Tanzania campus to participate in the workshop. It lasted three days, from Monday 29<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018.

The workshop involved lectures, protected time spent writing as well as a relatively intimate session where the facilitators were able to speak one-on-one with the writers and use their knowledge and experience to enhance the manuscripts. At the end of the workshop, the participants had worked on rough drafts of their manuscripts that they were encouraged to keep refining.

Samwel Gatimu, a member of staff at SONAM and beneficiary of the workshop shared that he learned a lot during the workshop. Some of the most unique parts about the whole experience were the “hands-on learning” which he said came from the one-on-one time with the instructors as well as “... making a story out of research work”. He also shared that “...to develop research work, one needs mentorship” and “...there’s a need for peer review”. Both of these aspects helped him change how he sees research work going forward.

As I sat in on one of the sessions, one of the moderators, Anjuli Wagner said, “This is one way how women get behind in academia.” What a curious statement. She was referring to name-changes, especially when a woman who already has a couple of publications under her belt gets married, and adopts her spouse’s name. Therefore, any other publications she participates in credit the author under a different name than the name she had been using all along, creating the impression that this is a completely different author when in fact, only the name has changed. Anjuli suggested that everybody doing publications should use ORCID, a platform which gives every researcher a

unique digital identifier that looks past name-changes and keeps a record of a researcher’s published work. These are just some of the important bits that the participants were able to gather from their interactions with the University of Washington faculty.

At the end of the day, capacity-building is at the top of SONAM’s agenda because for our students to receive quality, the faculty must be keen on continuous improvement.

Overall, the three-day workshop was a success, and we’re about to find out how helpful the learning was from the quality of the final manuscripts from the attendees. No pressure.



Dr Agnes Msoka working on her manuscript



David Katz (instructor) going through a manuscript with attendees



The entire team during a session of protected time spent writing

# New trustees visit SONAM East Africa campuses

By *Martie Mtange*

We have two new trustees! In early February, the Honourable Mohamed Othman and Dr Antonio Rendas, our two new trustees, toured SONAM's East Africa campuses. They were accompanied by Mr Yusuf Keshavjee, who has been a member of the Aga Khan University Board of Trustees since 2006.

The Board of Trustees usually assumes legal responsibility over a charitable organisation, as well as decision-making powers regarding the direction of that organisation. Therefore, when you have the Honourable Othman on your Board of Trustees, you are in safe legal hands. The Honourable Othman is a Muslim legal scholar who served as the Chief Justice of Tanzania from December 2010 to January 2017, after serving as both a High Court and Appeal Court Judge. Justice Othman's previous experience includes being the Prosecutor General for East Timor, Chief of Prosecutions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Senior Legal and Justice Reform Advisor for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Cambodia, Chairman of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on the Relocation of Pastoralists and their Livestock from Usanga Valley in Ihefu, and Public Prosecutor for the Bank of Tanzania. Additionally, he worked with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Talk about a great CV!

Dr Antonio Manuel Bensabat Rendas is similarly distinguished. He has been the Rector of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (NOVA) since January 2007, and was President of the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities from 2010–2014. António Rendas received his PhD in Experimental Pathology (pulmonary hypertension) in 1977 from the Cardiothoracic Institute, University of London. Between 1974 and 1978, he was a researcher at the University of London and Harvard Medical School. In 1979 he returned to Portugal, where he began his teaching practice at NOVA Medical School/Faculdade de Ciências Médicas, which he continues to this day. His life has been fully dedicated to medical practice and teaching.

The two new trustees toured all

SONAM campuses in East Africa and met with the Dean, Professor Sharon Brownie, when they made their stop in Nairobi, Kenya. The Dean, alongside the Executive Officer, Yvonne Mathu, and Academic Head for SONAM in Kenya, Dr Eunice Ndirangu, took the new trustees around the school's library. The tour was part of the trustees' welcome package to help acquaint them with the institutions with which they will be entrusted in their new capacities. SONAM was glad to host them.

For those who are in pursuit of their own PhDs and other career qualifications, may you find strength in the achievements of our new Board of Trustee members, and trust that all your hard work will be rewarded.



AKU's incoming trustees, Dr Antonio Rendas and Honourable Mohammed Othman with Mr Yusuf H Keshavjee

# The Midwifery Conference that almost never happened

## *Midwives Association of Kenya 2nd Annual Scientific Conference*

By *Martie Mtange*

The Midwives Association of Kenya (MAK) 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Scientific Conference almost didn't happen, as confessed by Mrs. Louisa Muteti, the chairperson of MAK.

Amidst "election uncertainty, the nursing strike and nurses being unable to attend" due to other commitments, the conference seemed doomed to fail. "Usually the room would be packed!" she said on the second day of the conference at the AMREF auditorium, which was still quite full.

The three-day conference from 13-15<sup>th</sup> December attracted nurses and midwives from all over the country as well as representatives from government, particularly from the Ministry of Health. It was largely a scholarly conference with oral presentations, exhibitions and workshops from global and regional stakeholders such as Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizen Trust (JJCT), Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, Save the Children, Babylove Network as well as Procter & Gamble Kenya.

Our own Eunice Atsali presented her study on Factors Contributing to Under-utilization of Water Birth Delivery Services at Aga Khan University during the conference and moderated several other sessions with different speakers. Jane Kabo also actively participated, serving as both a moderator and presenting her own study on Psycho-social care and Communication by Midwives during childbirth in Nairobi, Kenya, which focused on taking into consideration the way midwives speak to patients who are undergoing childbirth. She explored questions that involved asking for consent before every procedure, wondering whether we are respectful to such child-bearing patients whether or not they're married, affording them some dignity and privacy during childbirth as well as encouraging rather than scolding mothers during childbirth.

One of the most fascinating presentations featured Martin Mburu, an official from the Ministry of Health who narrowed in on Strengthening adolescents and youth-friendly services in Kenya: Role of midwives and



Eunice Atsali and Jane Kabo from SONAM Nairobi celebrate during the MAK Conference during the ceremony to unveil MAK's strategic plan



Eunice Atsali speaking at the MAK Conference

nurses. His message was clear and simple: nurses and midwives have a role to play in safeguarding the second decade of life for adolescents. He shared that according to the National Adolescent Sexual Health and Reproduction Health Policy of 2015, adolescents can receive sexual and reproductive health services, and not just those considered adults by the constitution (people over 18 years of age). This is a great achievement in itself as it recognizes the importance of young people's lives across the board, rather than just their morality.

The conference also featured a pompous celebration to launch the MAK branches all over the country as well as the MAK Annual

General Meeting in which they launched their Midwifery Association of Kenya manifesto in the presence of their chairperson, Louisa Muteti as well as representatives from the various counties, the event sponsors, Ministry of Health Officials and even the Director of Nursing Services in the Ministry of Health, Mary Nandili. Ms Nandili shared that she had the privilege of employing two deputies who will be working under her. Amid several cheers, she pledged that one of these deputies will come from the fraternity of nurses, while the other will come from the midwifery discipline. In addition to this, she shared that she was in the process of establishing a programme that enables nurses and midwives to receive Masters Scholarships only. This announcement came after she asked the packed room, "How many nurses and midwives do we have here with more than a degree qualification?" to which no more than five hands went up in a room of more than two-hundred and fifty people. The Director noted that there are too few nurses with a Masters education, and that this needed to change so that nurses can not only solve problems through research but also be eligible to apply for more advanced opportunities within government organizations, in order to influence policy.

The conference was a celebration of knowledge, a celebration to launch the MAK manifesto and strategic plan as well as a celebration of all those involved in the inception of and support for the Midwifery Association of Kenya. A cake-cutting ceremony marked the milestones that this association worked so hard to deliver, amidst political tension and devastating nurses' strikes.

# Here's the inside scoop

## *MAK conference experience: A Ugandan perspective*

By *Martie Mtange*

On December 12, 2017, Hellen Kyakuwaire and her team of six students from SONAM Uganda landed in Nairobi to attend and present during the Midwifery Association of Kenya (MAK) Conference. The conference was scheduled to begin on December 13, the day after their arrival, and end on December 15.

Their abstracts had been accepted, and the team were to present to midwives and nurses attending the conference. Coincidentally, December 15 is Hellen's birthday, meaning she spent her birthday in Nairobi, which she was actually quite pleased about. For those who were unable to attend the MAK conference, we spoke to Hellen so that you could get a feel for her experience of the conference, which some termed 'an AKU event'.

### **1. For those of us who have not met you yet, who are you and what do you do?**

I am Kyakuwaire Hellen, MScN (Midwifery and Women's Health) and more interested in midwifery education and practice. I was the lead person for the Uganda group that attended the MAK conference. I work in the department of Midwifery for the AKU. My area of study is focused on midwives' experiences of caring for women during childbirth in a low resource healthcare setting in Uganda.

### **2. How did you find out about the conference?**

Professor Sharon Brownie, Dean of SONAM East Africa, sent the Midwifery Department of AKU-Uganda an email containing a call for abstracts by the MAK. The email was circulated to the faculty and students, who responded by sending their abstracts to the MAK organisers. It was an opportunity for those of us who felt that the audience present would be the right one to listen to the knowledge we had to share.

### **3. What happened during the conference?**

During the conference, papers were presented, followed by plenary discussions and debates on issues that affect midwives. MAK also held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) during the conference. Two activists, one from South Africa and one from Canada, as well as advocates

for midwifery education spoke during the conference. MAK also launched their 5-year strategic plan entitled 'Quality midwifery care for every woman and every newborn'.

### **4. What were the outcomes of your visit?**

I was able to share the findings of my study with colleagues in the profession, and actually the audience realised that these were true realities of midwives. The questions that were raised encouraged me to direct critical thought to policy that will enable midwives to deliver quality care. AKU showed strength at the conference and had quality presentations, including those by the students. The students' presentations were a reflection of the academic output of the AKU Bachelor of Science in Midwifery programme that started in February 2015 and ended in June 2017.



Hellen Kyakuwaire during a past Bachelor of Science in Midwifery class

### 5. How was your experience overall? Were there any interesting incidents outside of the conference that you would like to share?

The overall experience was very good in the sense that our students managed to present papers that were of quality. The interaction with highly-qualified midwives was motivating, and that gave students hope of achieving even greater things. Celebrating a student's birthday on the 12th, together with mine on the 15th, in Nairobi were interesting incidents outside the conference. It was the first time some of the students had been to Kenya; therefore, the nice hotel where we were accommodated gave them a nice feel for the country.

When the group was asked what they learned during the conference that

they were taking home, we received a couple of responses. Hellen noted, "Sharing results from research is so informative to practice, especially because as midwives, we end up in similar situations. Like the Kenyan midwives work in situations at times described by our research findings, so sharing proved relevant with regard to providing solutions to the problems which most midwives face." Nabosha Juliet commented, "What we learned is that midwives can improve the quality of care during childbirth services, they can individualise care to the mothers, provide respectful care no matter what the socio-economic status of a mother is, and they can develop policy frameworks that promote respectful and culturally sensitive care." Furthermore, Najjemba Joyce remembered one particular presentation from which she drew lessons. She shared, "The presentation on managing pain in neonates really touched me, because

when we cannulate neonates I thought they do not feel pain since their nerve endings are not fully developed." Margaret Namawanda said she had actually adopted a new strategy since attending the conference in Kenya. She said, "One of the coordinators taught us something practical that I have since used to explain to the mothers that I attend to when educating them about positioning the baby during feeding. She told us to turn our heads to the right side and swallow as fast as we could. It was so hard for each one of us and made us imagine how much harder it would be for a newborn."

Other students in attendance included Kirikumwino Agnes, whose area of research was exploring the knowledge of healthcare workers on Kangaroo Mother Care for low birth weight babies in Mulago Hospital Special Care Unit; Nakyanzi Agnes and Atim Irene, whose research area was exploring midwives' knowledge and practice of severe preeclampsia in private patients' labour suite.", but in different clinical settings. As a take-home message, Hellen finished off by saying, "Conferences are unique areas for learning, so having opportunities to present papers opens gates for more learning." Guess what? You are absolutely right Hellen!

### Also, there was sharing of midwifery experiences across the East African context.

#### What we liked about the conference:

- It was so motivating to participate as a presenter!
- Travelling as a group boosted our morale because we had people to support us as we presented.
- We were happy that our travel, accommodation, food and refreshments, as well as conference fees, were taken care of.
- The speeches by the CEO of Kisumu and an alumnus from the AKU were very inspiring!
- Some activists who spoke seemed to have a real feel for what midwifery is about. They were great advocates for East Africa, especially with regard to advocacy for midwifery education and service delivery.

#### What could have been done better at the conference:

- The AGM was held on the second day, which pushed the other presentations to the last day when most members had left, so this was one aspect I did not like about the conference. It would have been better if the AGM had been held on the last day.
- We also did not like the way the topics for presentation were arranged; this made the plenary discussion incomplete. It would have been good for the topics to be arranged according to the themes of the conference. That way, the plenary discussions would have been more meaningful.



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

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