



## Message from the Dean

### *Rebirth of Midwifery in East Africa.*

This edition of the newsletter shines a special light on the midwifery profession as the world renews its focus towards improving maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) outcomes and advocates strengthening the quality midwifery education and training.

Nurses and midwives have much to contribute in commitment to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #3, which seeks to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. The formation of the 17 SDGs comes after disappointing results from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), notably MDG #5, which was meant to reduce maternal mortality rate by 75% and provide universal access to reproductive care, particularly in the Sub-Saharan Africa, where the need for reproductive healthcare access is greatest.

Here at SONAM, we have the privilege of strengthening the midwifery workforce to help achieve SDG #3 by offering relevant nursing programmes that will equip nurses and midwives in tackling the challenges that arise when caring for expectant mothers, newborns and children. In 2015, we launched the Bachelor of Science in Midwifery (BScM) programme in Uganda and witnessed the first cohort to graduate at this year’s convocation. We hope



to see the same success in Kenya as this week we welcomed the first cohort of 16 students into the BScM programme, of which eight have joined from Kisumu through the generous support of donors who are undertaking impactful MNCH projects within the region. There is also ongoing work on the development of a master’s in midwifery curriculum which we hope to launch in the 2019 year. The need to offer graduate level nursing programmes in the region is imperative to ensure nurses and midwives have the specialized training and skills to keep up with 21<sup>st</sup> century health care challenges.

In this newsletter, we also share a compilation of midwifery-related publications published in the past year by our faculty who are actively engaged in research and continue

to improve the current body of knowledge.

We also profile our ‘*Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Associations Project*’ in partnership with Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust. This venture has provided a platform for nurses and midwives to come together to form nursing and midwifery associations across the region. These associations are important because they provide

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strong and supportive connections among nurses and midwives, the midwifery profession and other stakeholders. You can read more about this project in this issue.

The newsletter also features stories which impact women's health including our support in the fight against cancer, such as the Chemosafe program and Breast Cancer Awareness Symposium. These initiatives have been bolstered by our relationships with Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and other partners including Dr Barton-Burke, the Director of Nursing Research at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. As we proceed past the half-year mark, we shall continue to do our part in trying to achieve Sustainable Development Goal #3- "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."

*Professor Sharon Brownie*

**Dean**

**SONAM EA**



## Special Midwifery Feature

*Introduction by Professor Grace Edwards*

Welcome to the June edition of the newsletter, which celebrates the work of AKU-SONAM in developing quality midwifery education. The 2018 theme for the International Day of the Midwife resonates with SONAM's vision of creating midwifery leaders who will lead the way with quality care, highlighting the vital role that midwives play in ensuring women and their new-borns navigate pregnancy and childbirth safely.

Our midwifery faculty and students across the three campuses were actively involved in the International Day of the Midwife, raising the profile of SONAM across East Africa. We are also proud of graduating the first bachelor degree-level midwives in Uganda, and gaining approval to start the midwifery programme in Kenya in August.

One of the main challenges in



providing quality midwifery care in East Africa is a lack of clearly-defined midwifery standards and clear educational pathways to develop competent, educated midwives who can practice safely, lead the profession and influence the outcomes of midwifery care. The State of the World's Midwifery (UNFPA, 2014) demonstrated that midwives, who are educated and

regulated to international standards, are competent to deliver 87 per cent of the maternity needs of women in their care. In all three countries, our faculty are actively involved in influencing and developing the pathways that will help to impact positively on maternal and perinatal mortality as we work towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Midwifery publications and conference papers are increasing at a great rate, reinforcing the importance of the role of midwives.

On a personal note, on 12 June, I was privileged to be awarded a fellowship by the Royal College of Midwives in the UK. This award is given to very few midwives and it was a very proud moment to be announced as the Professor of Midwifery at AKU; a little piece of East Africa in the UK.

To quote my favourite African proverb,

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Together we are making a difference.

# AHMED SARKI



**What is your name and where are you from?**

Dr Ahmed Mohammed Sarki from Nigeria.

**In what role are you joining us?**

I am joining AKU as a member of faculty in Uganda. I'll be teaching 'Introduction to Epidemiology, Microbiology and Parasitology' as well as 'Community Health'.

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

Before I joined AKU, I was a postdoctoral researcher at Oxford Institute of Nursing, Midwifery, and Allied Health Research at the Oxford Brookes University in the UK.

I was also a postdoctoral research consultant for Population Council

Kenya, as well as a field research associate during a joint project between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA and the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria. Additionally, I served as the coordinator of the Sub-Saharan Africa Research Network at the Institute of Advanced Study, University of Warwick, UK.

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

Amazing team spirit.

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

"The purpose of life is not to be happy, it is to be useful, to be honourable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*



**THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY**  
*School of Nursing and Midwifery in East Africa*

# Explore. Discover.

*An education that makes a difference*



## Programs:

- EN-RN Diploma Programme
- Oncology Nursing
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing
- Bachelor of Science in Midwifery

**CAMPUSES:**  
KENYA, TANZANIA AND UGANDA

# Professor Grace Edwards recognised by the Royal College of Midwives

## *SONAM East Africa professor receives national midwifery award*

By Martie Mtange

Professor Grace Edwards from AKU-SONAM East Africa has received a national award from the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) for her dedication to midwifery.

She received the acclaimed RCM Fellowship, an honour reserved for a few midwives who make an outstanding contribution, or give outstanding service, to midwifery, maternity services, services for women and their families or to the RCM. She was presented with the Fellowship on June 12, 2018 at the RCM Education Conference in London.

Professor Edwards is the Foundation Professor for Midwifery Education and Practice for our School of Nursing & Midwifery in East Africa. She is based in Uganda, but works across East Africa in various capacities. Professor Edwards was one of the pioneer consultant midwives in the UK, as well as the first professor of midwifery in East Africa. She has worked in several midwifery capacities over a career spanning

41 years, and sustains her clinical practice at Kawempe Mulago Hospital in Kampala, Uganda.

Regarding the award, Professor Edwards shared, “I am honoured to receive this award from the RCM, which is presented to individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to midwifery. I was very proud to be able to highlight the work that SONAM-AKU is doing in East Africa to develop critical thinking midwifery leaders who are making a positive contribution to reduce maternal and perinatal mortality.”

Ms Loveluck Mwasha, senior instructor in midwifery at SONAM Tanzania, was recognised by the International Confederation of Midwives in 2017 through the ‘Midwife for Life’ award. This year, SONAM East Africa is happy once again to have a member of faculty being recognised for their contribution to the midwifery profession. This outlines the institution’s commitment to consistently prioritise having well-intentioned faculty who deliver quality education to the next generation of nurses and midwives. In so doing, the next generation of nurses and midwives will continue to prioritise the care of women and their families, just as their predecessors did.



Professor Edwards taking students through a practical session



From left: Kathryn Gutteridge (President, RCM), Professor Grace Edwards and Gill Walton (Chief Executive Officer, RCM)

# The master's in midwifery curriculum workshop

## *The journey of 1,000 miles starts with one step*

By *Nepurko Keiwua*

All roads led to Nairobi in early May 2018, when SONAM faculty from the three campuses in East Africa came together to work on developing the curriculum for the future Master of Science in Midwifery (MScM) course. Associate Professor Columba Mbekenga, SONAM Tanzania Academic Head, and Dr Eunice Siaity-Pallangyo represented Tanzania, while Dr Grace Edwards joined in from Uganda. Professor Mbekenga expressed joy and happiness because it is planned that the Dar es Salaam campus would be the first in East Africa to offer this advanced master's-level course.

The team was led by renowned midwifery scholar, Professor Valerie Fleming from the Liverpool John Moore University. Professor Fleming volunteered her time to provide expert advice and leadership to faculty as they set about the business of building a high quality MScM programme.

The professor had this to say about her experience, "My time with your international team from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania was not only extremely profitable, but good fun and hard work. The energy was amazing and the quality of work, superb. Starting the MScM is a huge boost not only to midwives but especially for women and babies in the region. It is well known that well educated midwives can help to save lives and this programme is a step in that direction." The Dean, Professor Brownie welcomed Professor Fleming addition to the team, saying, "We are exceptionally privileged to have the input of an international expert who has now joined SONAM as an adjunct professor and will continue to provide guidance with regards to the developing programme."

Professor Grace Edwards, faculty from Uganda was on hand to give advice and shared her experience of



Professor Grace Edwards (Uganda faculty) and Dr Eunice Siaity-Pallangyo (Tanzania faculty) trade notes during one of the breaks



Associate Professor Columba Mbekenga and Professor Valerie Fleming share a light moment during the session



From left: Professor Sharon Brownie, Dean SONAM East Africa; Professor Valerie Fleming, Liverpool John Moore University; Dr Eunice Siaty-Pallangyo, Tanzania; Professor Grace Edwards, Uganda; Dr Eunice Ndirangu, Kenya; and Associate Professor Columba Mbekenga, Tanzania.

the first of many curriculum meetings for this course. She commented, “The meeting has been extremely positive. There was a meeting of minds giving a truly international insight into the development of our MScM. We [at SONAM EA] decided to develop a MScM that is inclusive for both nurses and midwives with a passion for family and reproductive care. In Kenya and Tanzania, the majority of nurses are also midwives so we developed an MSc with a specialised stream for midwifery. In Uganda, nursing and midwifery are separate professions, so we decided to develop a stream that still focused on family health, but that allowed access for nurses who are not midwives who still had a passion for family and reproductive health. The curriculum has been developed to have a common core of advanced courses that will take nurses and midwives up to master’s level. These courses will be beneficial to all participants. A strong research theme underpins the whole programme.”

In terms of her experience in developing curricula elsewhere, Professor Edwards added, “I developed midwifery curricula in the UK, but my most memorable curriculum was developing a midwifery course in the United Arab Emirates, which resulted in the graduation of the first locally-educated Emirati

midwives. I was extremely proud and they are now in senior clinical roles within midwifery.”

I asked associate Professor Columba Mbekenga about her experience working on a curriculum for the MScM and not nursing first, given that the Tanzania Campus is yet to start offering a bachelor’s degree in midwifery. She said, “Given the high maternal and neonatal mortality/morbidity rates in Tanzania and across East Africa, starting with MScM seemed sensible and will definitely contribute to the creation of a pool of highly skilled midwives to curb the situation. Currently, Tanzania has only two universities that provide midwifery education at a master’s level, creating a great demand among BScN/M graduates who wish to specialise in midwifery across the country. This will also mean a creation of a career path and opportunity for professional development, especially among AKU alumni and other working nurses/midwives who will be able obtain their master’s degree while working.”

As the academic heads and faculty continue to prepare this monumental new programme, we would like to wish them the very best in this first step.

# Congratulations to graduating BScN and oncology nursing students of the class of 2018!



## *Exceptional pass rate by students*

By *Martie Mtange*

The 2018 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) class graduated 28 students and the inaugural Diploma in Oncology programme graduated 16. On 28 June, we received news of a 100% pass-rate confirming that all passed the Nursing Council of Kenya exams. Our heartiest congratulations to our students and also our faculty who worked tirelessly to prepare them! We are so very proud.

The first cohort to graduate from the oncology nursing programme sat their Kenya Registered Oncology Nurse examinations. Of the 16 who sat the exam, 13 passed with Distinction and three passed with Credit. Congratulations from everyone at SONAM; we wish our graduates all the best in all their endeavours. Your instructors, Ms Tayreez Mushani and Ms Diana Kassaman, are very proud of you.

BScN Faculty, from left: Ms Isabel Kambo, Ms Gladys Mbuthia and Ms Esther Nderitu



From left: Ms Tayreez Mushani and Ms Dinah Kassaman after receiving news of their students' exceptional pass rate

# One step at a time

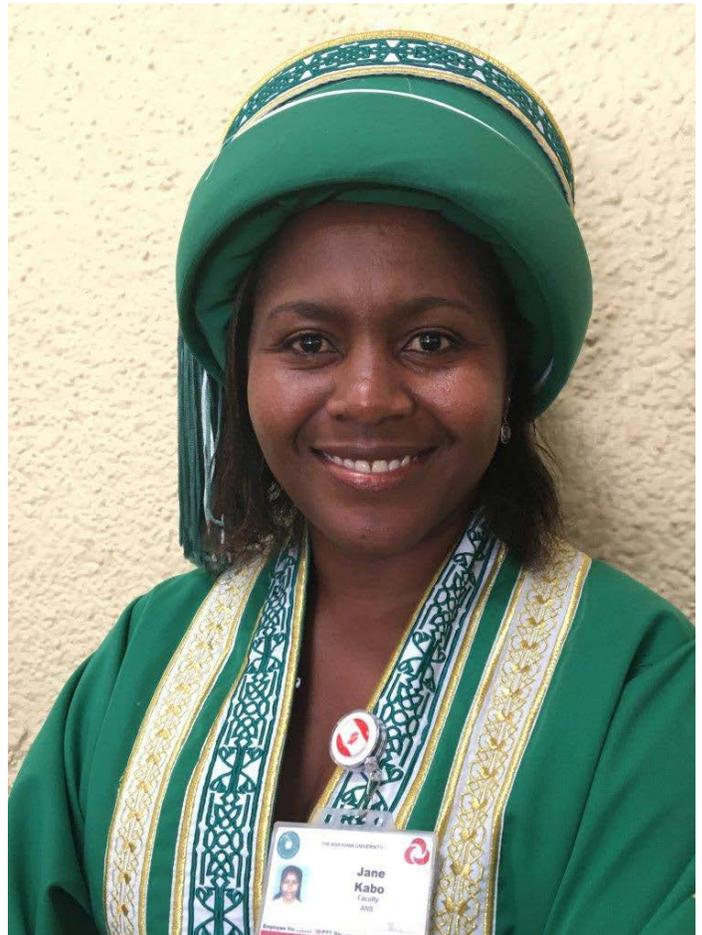
## *Undertaking the PhD journey*

By Nepurko Keiwua

There is a Chinese proverb that says, “The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.” For many, the prospect of attaining a PhD may seem daunting, but the few that choose that path tackle the PhD ‘mountain’ bit by bit until they make it to the peak. In this issue we speak with two members of faculty who have achieved incredible milestones in their professional careers. Ms Jane Kabo, SONAM Kenya faculty, approaches the end of her PhD journey at the University of South Africa, while Mr Victor Mathias, SONAM Tanzania faculty, recently completed his first *viva* at the University of Stellenbosch.

As a trained midwife, Ms Kabo had this to say about the differences she encountered while pursuing her PhD: “I studied for my masters in Midwifery and Obstetric Nursing at the University of Nairobi, which was a full time programme. The academic supervisors were able to dedicate more teaching time to their supervision role. In contrast, the doctoral programme has been executed through distance learning with very limited face-to-face interactions with supervisors. We communicated through emails, which sometimes made feedback take longer. Occasionally, I found myself expecting a lot more of a teaching role from supervisors, which unfortunately could not be availed under this programme. At PhD level, one is expected to do more work with minimal academic supervision, as compared with a master’s programme. The doctoral programme has also been more demanding in terms of the required level of rigor. A doctoral candidate is expected to play an active role in the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, while demonstrating exquisite understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry. The student is also expected to continuously develop transferable research skills, such as critical reasoning, problem-solving, and in-depth analysis. PhD study requires a more intense commitment in terms of work discipline and intellectual energy. It is a long undertaking that runs for numerous years for one to effectively earn a PhD. A PhD candidate is also required to exercise a high degree of perseverance as compared with a student who is under the master’s programme.”

She mentioned that the support accorded to her by the Dean, SONAM East Africa and Academic Head here in Nairobi, by allowing her one day a week for research



Ms Jane Kabo at a past AKU convocation ceremony



Mr Victor Mathias on campus at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa



Ms Kabo confers with her PhD supervisor, Professor JM Mathibe-Neke

work was immensely helpful in ensuring she remained on track.

Mr Mathias termed his first *viva* as “thought-provoking” and shared that it was challenging to make a presentation in front of the panel. But nonetheless, he said the secret to his success was good preparation, having a supportive supervisor, confidence and owning his work. He said that along this journey, he has had to make lifestyle changes in order to deal with some of the obstacles he has faced. He ended up dedicating more of his time to the pursuit of his PhD and reduced socialising and entertainment by 60 per cent. He credits his ability to meet his deadlines as having fostered a good relationship with his supervisor, and said that this good relationship was one of the factors that ensured he completed his first year of PhD study successfully.

On the subject of thesis topics, Ms Kabo dealt with life at its earliest, while Mr Mathias is tackling life’s

sunset stages. Ms Kabo’s study, entitled *‘High Impact, Low Cost Interventions to Enhance the Outcome of Pre-term Babies in Kilifi County’* sought to establish the level of implementation of low cost interventions, while highlighting barriers and enablers to midwives in implementing quality packages of interventions for preterm babies. She added that, “Findings from this study have great potential to leverage the design of instructional strategies that will facilitate effective implementation of appropriate guidelines so as to improve health outcomes of preterm babies.”

When I asked her why she chose that area of study she said, “Care for preterm babies remains a domain that attracts very little attention from academics and the healthcare community of practice, yet prematurity remains the leading cause of deaths among children under five years, while also leading to later life disability for many preterm babies. It is estimated that Kenya registers close to 200,000 preterm babies annually, yet

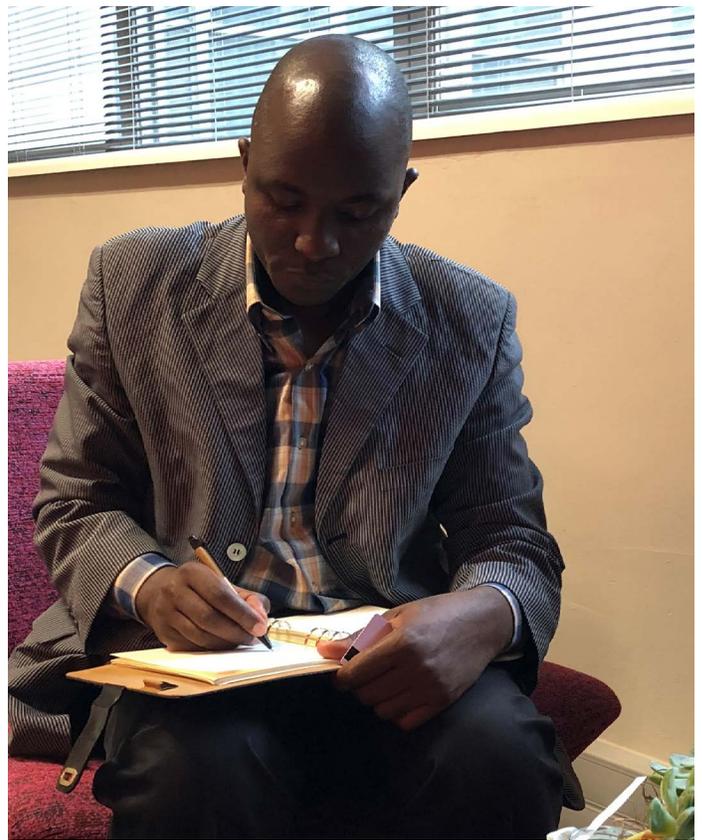
the healthcare workforce is too strained, leading to very little focus and feeble scientific discourse about premature babies. By casting the beam on quality of care at prematurity, this research contributes to a body of knowledge that will lead to better management of pre-term complications, thereby playing a critical role in saving of lives at this most vulnerable age of life. The choice of this topic was thus a rescue mission pursued through a scientific enterprise.”

She added that initially identifying a topic to pursue was difficult, and mentioned that she felt like “...an octopus on skates while trying to navigate her balance in unknown waters.” This feeling abated when she held consultations with prospective PhD supervisors and fellow PhD students, as this enabled her to get the right mind-set and direct her focus to the ultimate prize of attaining her PhD.

Mr Mathias, selected his topic *‘developing health standards for homes for the elderly in Tanzania’* because he had observed that older adults in Tanzania missed care from their relatives, but that lack of care was also experienced even when they went into homes for older adults. He said, “For that reason I planned a study [on how to] to develop quality health standards which can be used as guidance on how to provide quality care to that group.”

When I asked the two candidates how this journey has changed how they fulfil their roles at SONAM, Mr Mathias said that PhD study had opened him up to a different experience, and this has in turn increased his confidence in his work. He believes that it is important to base your work and arguments on evidence-based practice. He added, “The exposure I am getting from various academicians who I meet through various activities relating to PhD studies have made me strong in my daily activities. By the end of this PhD journey, I hope my capability in working with SONAM will be excellent.”

Ms Kabo shared that she realised she was serving a higher calling than simply attaining the PhD accolade. She shared that, “This engagement would not only be beneficial to me as a candidate, but would also contribute to the wellbeing of SONAM as an institution. The midwifery profession within the country will also benefit from my doctoral study, if well undertaken. There have been numerous direct and indirect pressures that have kept me focused on the mission. My study has taught me essential transferable skills, organisational skills, planning skills and time management. My knowledge and skills will be vital when we begin the BScM programme [in Kenya], which is a big milestone for the midwifery profession, not only within the institution, but also in the country.”



Mr Mathias making some notes in preparation for his viva

When I asked the two candidates about the challenges they faced along this journey, Ms Kabo mentioned that balancing work, family needs and PhD study became a juggling act for her. She went on to add that, “Often times you have to work round the clock and put in more hours, even as you constantly fight the physical and mental fatigue that lingers on at the end of each day. I have been able to overcome this by planning ahead and never committing myself to everyone and everything. Peer group support has also been very helpful; I keep learning with others as I share with them. The journey has been challenging and fulfilling in equal measure.”

While Mr Mathias faced similar challenges, he confessed that he had to restructure his order of priorities to cope with and succeed at his PhD study. He credits fully dedicating himself to this endeavour as part of the reason for his successful first year as a PhD candidate. In addition to intellectual discipline, Mr Mathias said, “...meeting [the] deadline of every task given by the supervisor promoted good relations among us and was one of the supporting factors for completing the first year successfully.”

As you all know, there are several SONAM faculty members undertaking their PhD’s. We would like to encourage you all to keep working on your chosen area of study and wish you all the very best.

# Midwife for life

## *In conversation with Ms Loveluck Mwash*

By Martie Mtange

A midwife's pride is the special moments experienced, that only a midwife can understand. *"A newborn's first cry kicking legs and arms, the looks of relief and joy in the mother's eyes when you say to her, 'Congratulations! It's a baby girl/boy!'"*

### **Family:**

Loveluck Mwash was born in 1959 as the fifth child in a family of six children. Her journey of taking care of others can be traced back to childhood; she enjoyed taking care of younger children within her extended family. Alongside her husband, Mr Kusiriel Mwash, she has been able to raise two sons and one daughter into capable young adults. She notes however, that she takes special pride in being "a grandma to two lovely children, little Arthur and his sister, Astrid".

### **Career:**

Her career in nursing started in 1983 after she graduated from the Muhimbili Medical Centre (now the Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences) with a diploma in nursing and midwifery. Since then, she hasn't looked back and has been working for Aga Khan Institutions for over twenty seven years. She currently works as a full-time lecturer at AKU-SONAM's Dar es Salaam Campus, and has served in this position for the past two years. She teaches midwifery-related courses as well as some nursing units.

Besides the direct workplace roles, Loveluck served as the vice chairperson of the Tanzania Nursing and Midwifery Council (TNMC) for a three-year term between January 2015 – 2018. She is also the vice president of the Tanzania Midwives Association (TAMA).

### **Accomplishments:**

In July 2017, Ms Mwash received the "Midwife for Life" award from the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) during a lively celebration in Toronto, Canada.

Ms Mwash's provision of care extends past clinical settings. Aside from her professional and family obligations, she also volunteers in women's development groups, serves as a deaconess at her church and is also a wellness coach!

### **Motivation:**

Reflecting on her life generally and over thirty years of midwifery practice, Loveluck describe herself as a "person of undoubtable integrity" and "a passionate midwife".

What fulfills her at work is "seeing students enjoy learning and transforming their ways of thinking and practice. This demonstrates growth in professional competence and confidence, moving from theory to practice by providing



evidence-based care to clients. Also, discussions in post clinical conferences where students share their Aha! moments, their achievements, frustrations and how they managed the hurdles are simply rewarding for me. From maternity care perspective, seeing women receive care from qualified, competent midwives in a respectful and dignified manner is what makes me happy."

Looking back, Loveluck had always wanted to become a midwife but her aspiration became clearer when she was in secondary school and she decided to join the nursing and midwifery diploma programme. After completing the course, she went into clinical midwifery and has been a midwife ever since, helping women with pregnancy and childbirth complications and saving lives of mothers and newborn babies.

Who inspired her to become a midwife? Her mother of course! She describes her mother as a "strong willed, loving and caring person who supported many underprivileged families, particularly, women and children. She did this despite being a widow with moderate income by Tanzanian standards."

As a parting shot, Ms Mwash shared one thing about maternal healthcare in Tanzania that she would like to change: "recognition and strengthening of the midwifery profession independent of nursing. This is so that midwives are adequately prepared to meet the international standards. Well-prepared midwives can provide up to 87% of care required during pregnancy and childbirth. Always remember that "midwives save lives".

You can watch Ms Mwash's extended interview [here](#). Additionally, [here](#) is her interview upon receiving the "Midwife for life" award.

# The midwife who equips other midwives

## *SONAM alumna develops the midwifery curriculum for a university in Uganda*

By *Martie Mtange*

Joy Acen started training to be a midwife when she was 19 years old at Mulago school of Nursing and Midwifery, Uganda. When asked why she chose to become a midwife so early, she said, “I loved caring for the newborns and mothers at home.” She went on to reveal that she was inspired to be a midwife by “the dream that one day health facilities in my country will be able to offer mothers the quality, evidence-based and patient-centred care provided by advanced professional midwives; this is what keeps me waking up every day to be a midwife. That’s also what has pushed me from one level to another in the midwifery profession.”

Ms Acen first started practising as a community-based health nurse at Jjanda Medical Centre in Namugongo Wakiso (1998 to 2000) before moving on to International Hospital Kampala (2000 to 2002). Thereafter, she proceeded to work at the Mulago National Referral Hospital (2002 to 2016), where she served in the high-risk labour ward (seven years), the emergency obstetric theatre (two years), the high dependency unit (two years), the adult critical care ward (two years) and the severe

“The dream that one day health facilities in my country will be able to offer mothers the quality, evidence-based and patient-centred care provided by advanced professional midwives; this is what keeps me waking up every day to be a midwife. That’s also what has pushed me from one level to another in the midwifery profession.”

**Joy Acen**



eclamptic unit (two years). In most of these wards, she was the manager. Her seven-year stint in the labour ward led to her applying for the AKU-SONAM Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) programme. After completing her BScN, she was absorbed as part-time clinical faculty at AKU-SONAM in Kampala. This introduced her to a different world, and she realised she could have a major impact transferring tools, skills and knowledge to trainee nurses and midwives.

Now she is not only a mother but a midwife, with a Master of Science in Nursing (Midwifery and Women’s Health) from Makerere University. This would not only give her the opportunity to teach but also advance her understanding of midwifery. In June 2016 she joined Lira University, Uganda as a lecturer and Head of the Department of Nursing and Midwifery. It has been a long journey; one that has taken her in and out of several clinical settings in different levels and units of health facilities.

Ms Acen’s passion to support the midwifery programme at Lira University was influenced by a conflict her country has been involved in for more than 20 years between the Ugandan government and the Lord’s Resistance Army

(LRA). Over 1.5 million people were displaced during the period leaving the victims without adequate access to food, healthcare, education, safety, shelter, relief, among other needs. In June 2006, the Juba initiative was started by the South Sudanese government and supported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The initiative intended to facilitate peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA.

The peace talks were necessary because the LRA was fighting the Ugandan government for control of northern Uganda. Since the Juba initiative resumed in 2007, there has been a sense of ‘tense calm’ in northern Uganda, but the traces of devastation and fighting linger. One can never really erase the effects of war; you can only seek to repair what has been broken. Ms Acen has been able to help repair what was broken by helping to develop the curriculum for the midwifery programme at the university. She shared that, “It’s all about training midwives at the bachelor level. Northern Uganda had over two decades of political instability, which left the region in a backward state. There were so many problems related to reproductive issues, high maternal morbidity and mortality rates, high rates of teenage pregnancy as well as other complications like fistulas because of poor maternity services with a very low obstetrician/midwife to patient ratio.” Therefore, Lira University developed the idea of training midwives and equipping them with surgical skills to carry out simple caesarean section procedures. Ms Acen has been an integral part of developing the curriculum for this new Bachelor of Science in Midwifery programme, which she says she could not have achieved without the

“There were so many problems related to reproductive issues, high maternal morbidity and mortality rates, high rates of teenage pregnancy as well as other complications like fistulas because of poor maternity services with a very low obstetrician/midwife to patient ratio.”

**Joy Acen**

skills she gained at AKU-SONAM.

Ms Acen describes herself as ‘professional, daring and self-driven’. However, she knew that developing a curriculum to address the needs of mothers and babies was not going to be easy. Along the way, she has had to deal with a lack of midwifery lecturers at the required level to teach the course, limited or no equipment in the skills laboratory, inadequate clinical facilities for student practice and challenges in gaining approval from the professional council to run the course. Nonetheless, this did not stop the SONAM alumna! She developed relationships with Seed Global Health as well as Peace Corps Global Health Partnership to bridge the gap of lecturers and support in teaching materials. She also brought in a few part-time lecturers with the assistance of a loan from the African Development Bank (AfDB). The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency also enabled a few local midwives to pursue their masters and PhD qualifications through financial assistance. Additionally, AfDB facilitated the construction and procurement of equipment for a Teaching Hospital in order to ease practicum practice for students. This is part of a long-term strategy that will ensure Lira University uses locals to train midwives, rather than engaging external parties. Ms Acen has also participated in writing grants to secure laboratory equipment and is engaged in talks with the professional council to come up with a mutually-beneficial agreement that enables the university to train students adequately.

Ms Acen does not plan to slow her pace soon. She plans to get her PhD in “Competence of midwives in providing postnatal care” from Liverpool John Moores University – UK, to support her students and other midwives in research that will inform their professional practice. Going forward, Ms Acen shared her plans with the SONAM team, saying, “I wish to nurture a generation of professional midwives who are driven by passion to provide quality maternal child healthcare. This will be backed by midwifery-led research to target reduction of maternal and neonatal morbidity/mortality rates, which are at unacceptable levels of 336 per 1000 live births in Uganda.”

When a farmer plants a seed, having that seed grow into a plant is good, but not enough. The real pleasure comes when the seed bears fruit that the farmer can enjoy, and provide him/her with more seeds to increase the population of the trees. SONAM alumni are lovely seeds who are not only delivering care to communities but also equipping other passionate midwives with the tools and skills necessary to take care of their own communities.

That is where the real magic is!

# Alumni spotlight



**Name:** Agnes Kirikumwino

**Profession:** Midwife

**Place of work:** Mulago Kawempe Hospital

*So, who is Agnes?*

I am a bachelor degree-qualified midwife, master trainer in neonatal resuscitation and the head nurse in the special care baby unit with 16 years of working experience.

*What inspired you to become a midwife?*

Initially, I just loved helping out in the hospital. However, when I joined the midwifery institution, I was inspired to go and see how babies are born. I found out that midwives always give double happiness to both the mother and her family, compared with nurses who treat illnesses and discharge their patients.

*Does your work involve challenges about how best to support the women and babies in your care? How did you handle it?*

Absolutely! Being a midwife is not easy because you receive a person who goes through a lot of pain during childbirth, but becomes happy later on when she gets a live baby.

I once came across an anxious mother who had given birth to a live baby after losing about five pregnancies because of unknown causes. This time, when she came for antenatal classes she was tested for her blood type. She was rhesus negative, so she keenly followed up on this until delivery. She was given all of the prophylactic

Ms Agnes Kirikumwino receiving her degree during convocation

medications. When she gave birth, she could not believe it, she was shaking. Whenever she touched her baby, she was very careful not to hurt him, to the extent that she couldn't sleep and we had to counsel her. We took her through what to do to take care of her baby, and she finally calmed down.

Depressed mothers need time to figure out the cause of their depression. We try as much as possible to help them think positively about solutions, and consistently check-up on them after discharge.

*In which specialty within midwifery are you most interested?*

Neonatal care, because the babies cannot expect you to give them ideal care. They're babies, so they can't ask for anything. This reminds me of my duty to do my best to enhance their survival, since they are innocent.

*What advice would you give young people who would like to become midwives?*

For young people who would love to become midwives, they are most welcome! They'll be joining a unique and exciting profession that calls for passion to offer care to the women, their families and the community they come from. It's a profession that requires their commitment to deal with patients who need their skills, knowledge and a loving heart to give care. Lastly, I'd like to tell them that midwifery is also an academic profession where you can progress to the highest level. You now have a clear path from the certificate-level all the way to a PhD.

# Alumni spotlight

**Name:** Juliet Nabbosa

**Profession:** Midwife

**Place of work:** Mulago National Referral Hospital

*Who is Juliet Nabbosa?*

I'm a midwife who trained at the Mulago Nurse Training School. Thereafter, I joined AKU for a Bachelor's degree in midwifery. I was in the pioneer group in East Africa, with 12 years' experience.

*As a midwife, what is your day like?*

My day begins at 5:00 am. I'm a mother from that time, then I set off for work by 6:00 am. By 7:30 am I'm at work interacting with pregnant women who come for antenatal care



in the unit. I work until 5:00 pm, and attend to about 80 women daily. Some women just need to be talked to, others to be investigated and

others to be referred for more care.

*What makes you happy at work?*

I just love seeing my clients who initially had complications getting healthy pregnancies and receiving a positive pregnancy outcome through holistic, quality and evidence-based interventions.

*If you could change one thing about midwifery in Uganda, what would it be?*

I love my profession and want to do everything possible to make it stronger. So my major change would be to see things working the right way, and for people both within and outside the profession to develop positive attitudes towards midwifery.



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# Great expectations

## *Oncology class of 2018 throws surprise baby shower for colleagues*

*By Nepurko Keiwua*

The end of semester exams going on at SONAM Nairobi campus have not deterred the current Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing (2018) students. They were able to organise and surprise three of their classmates who are expectant mothers with a joint baby shower during a lull in their exams on June 7, 2018. Ms Josephine Oduor, Ms Joan Munyugi and Ms Lynet Odendo were suitably surprised. This was due, in part, to their lecturers' involvement in the grand plan.

Ms Tayreez Mushani and Ms Diana Kassaman were on hand to distract the mums-to-be as their classmates decorated lecture room one for the upcoming party. The look on the ladies' faces said it all as soon as they opened the door to their classroom. All three expressed their gratitude and shared their joy at receiving gifts from their classmates.

This cohort of oncology nursing students is a tight knit group, and these ties shone through during the surprise baby shower. Ms Odendo was especially touched by her classmates' support, and shared her gratitude in her characteristic soft-spoken way. The oldest in the class, Ms Purity Kariuki, welcomed the opportunity to have four more grandchildren under her wing, as one of the male



The three mums-to-be slice their cake during the celebrations

students had also recently had a baby. SONAM is known to provide an enabling and baby friendly environment whereby mothers and moms are able to complete their studies under the work study programme- as they are only required to attend classes on campus twice a week.

To all expectant mothers at SONAM, we congratulate you and wish you all the best in this new chapter of life's journey.



The delicious cake for the mums-to-be

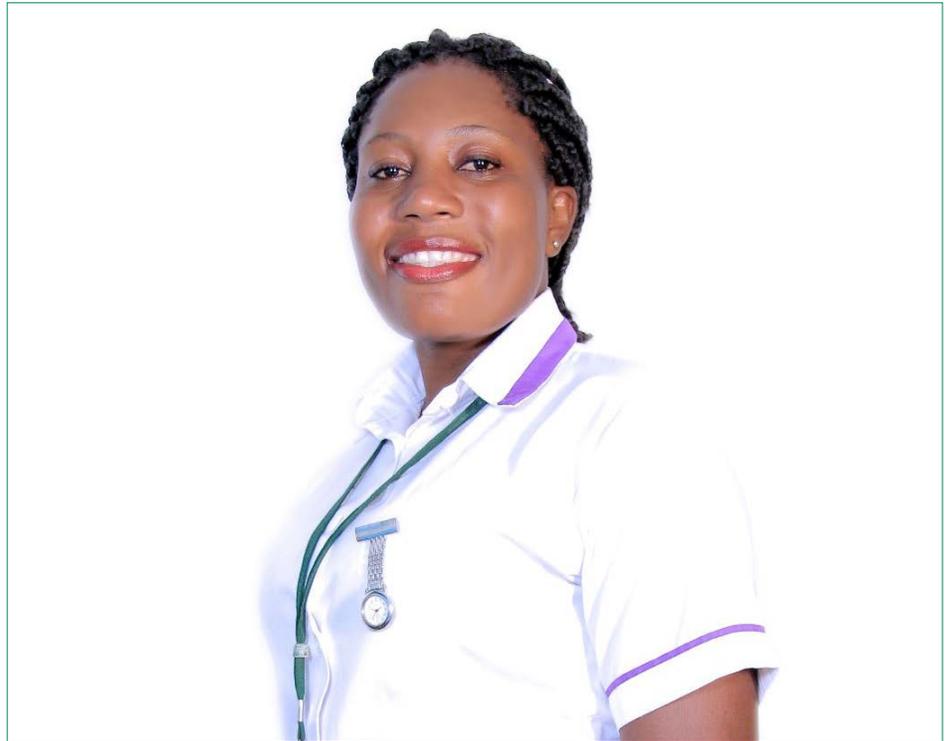
# Getting to know Harriet Nayiga

## *Excerpt from the Potentash blog*

Harriet Nayiga is a Bachelor of Science in Midwifery (BScM) student at SONAM Uganda and class representative for BScM 2018. Harriet advocates strongly for quality midwifery delivery. Recently she was interviewed by Potentash, a Kenyan website that focuses on lifestyle, culture, technology and women. Today we profile and celebrate her contribution to Midwifery practice.

Harriet is a practising midwife born in Masaka, Uganda. She is the seventh-born in a family of 10 children. Following outstanding performance in her advanced levels in 2009, she was offered a Government Scholarship to undertake a Diploma in Midwifery at the Mulago School of Nursing and Midwifery. During that period, she also volunteered as a casualty nurse in the same hospital. In nursing school she was recognised with the 2013 midwife of the year award. After graduating, she was recommended to work with Wakisa Ministries, an organisation that offers pregnancy care, temporary shelter and counselling for teenagers with crisis pregnancies. Here, she spent three years working as a full-time house mother and took care of pregnant adolescents. She organised antenatal clinics, conducted training on birth preparedness and gave health education talks. She also empowered the girls by teaching them how to make handicraft items for sale, such as candles, bags and key holders.

After working at Wakisa for some time, Harriet realised that there were



Harriet Nayiga, a SONAM Midwifery Graduate

major challenges in the provision of maternal healthcare services. She decided to progress her studies to become a more competent midwife. Therefore, she resigned from Wakisa Ministries and joined AKU in Kampala to undertake a BScM. She also took up a part-time job as a midwife at Wentz Medical Centre. She is set to complete the course in December 2018 and graduate in February 2019. Currently, she engages the community in health education matters such as testing for sexually transmitted infections, HIV and hepatitis B. Harriet shares her thoughts about her career.

### **Tell us a little about yourself.**

I am a professional midwife of passion, with four years' experience, and now pursuing my BScM at Aga Khan University Kampala Campus, training at Mulago National Referral

Hospital. My career interest is focused on adolescents and youth sexual and reproductive health, to see that they pass through those developmental stages with better health choices and behavioural practices, in order to age gracefully.

### **Did you always want to be a midwife?**

My childhood dream was to become a nurse. This was a profession I grew up hearing about in the community in which I was raised. I heard about it from my mother, playmates and over the radio. Little did I know that there was the option of midwifery, which was an independent profession. I was born and raised in a rural setting characterised by traditional birth attendants (TBAs). These were elderly women and herbalists with little or no scientific knowledge of midwifery. This

deprived me of role models in the health profession, including midwives.

### You joined AKU-SONAM Kampala campus in 2016. How has your experience been so far?

I always say that AKU is the right place for me to pursue my course. My experience so far has been exciting because I've been studying in a conducive environment that facilitates my learning. At AKU, I've seen lecturers who individualise the needs of each student and totally devote themselves to helping and supporting a student towards attaining her objectives.

Personally, I've been transformed. I believe that this change is conspicuous at my places of work through the improved quality of midwifery care and in communities where I provide health sensitisation. I believe AKU is training world-changers. On top of all that, I would not have managed to meet all the financial requirements of the programme. However, the partial scholarship given to me by the university has been a great blessing.

### Why are such programmes important?

Such programmes are very important because they act as eye-openers for a midwife/nurse to not only wait to inject a patient or deliver a mother but to use critical thinking skills in providing holistic care to women and families. The programmes provide evidence-based knowledge that enables a midwife/nurse to deliver culturally sensitive and friendly health services that meet the satisfaction of people, which is not the case at enrolment or registration levels.

### How best can we sensitise the community about the importance of midwifery?

We cannot just talk about the importance of midwifery. The importance should manifest starting from clinical areas. This can be done by providing friendly, individualised care to communities. In the developing world, a number of factors such as poverty, long distances and poor transport systems, among others, disable mothers from reaching health facilities. Therefore, midwifery services should not wait for patients to reach the centres but should reach people in the community who are in most need. I think this is why TBAs and herbalists have been good for communities. For example, in my community, I can encounter up to five herbalists daily who use the door-to-door approach to explain the importance of their services, unlike midwifery services.

As midwives, we are also trained to be educators, counsellors, researchers, leaders and advocates for communities. We should therefore engage the community together with political, cultural and religious leaders through different platforms. These platforms could include community radios, home visits, village meetings, churches, schools, village theatres (music, dance and drama), sports competitions and walk and marathon programmes. There is also a need for midwives to engage in leadership from the community level so that our voices can be heard. This is when a friendly and healthy relationship will be created between midwives and local people. This will enable midwives to discover the community's health needs and address them appropriately. Thereafter, the local people will start to seek out our services.

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# World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH)

## *Supporting nurses to deliver universal health coverage*

By Nepurko Keiwua

The WISH Forum is a global healthcare community dedicated to capturing and disseminating the best evidence-based practice and ideas. At a midterm review held in April 2018 at Doha, Qatar, SONAM East Africa Dean, Professor Sharon Brownie jointly chaired a forum-led presentation with Lord Nigel Crisp, entitled '*Nursing and Universal Health Coverage*'.

The developing report led by Professor Brownie and Lord Crisp outlines opportunities and recommendations for nurse's contributions to the achievement of universal health coverage. The formal report will be released approximately two weeks prior to the 2018 WISH Forum in November <http://www.wish.org.qa/>

While at WISH, Professor Brownie noted that such meetings are interesting and rigorous processes, and she was proud to be at the forefront of highlighting the global contribution of nurses and midwives to healthcare access and service provision. Such a session enables peer review of policy papers to inform best practice across various healthcare sectors.



From left: Lord Nigel Crisp, Co-chair Nursing Now; Professor Sharon Brownie, Dean SONAM East Africa; a senior health official; and Dr Charlotte Refsum, Nursing Now

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## UPDATE ON THE STRENGTHENING MIDWIFERY AND NURSING ASSOCIATIONS PROJECT

# Exploring a new frontier

### *Chat with the new Johnson & Johnson secondee on his role*

By Nepurko Keiwua

For the past four years, SONAM East Africa has hosted a Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust secondee. The secondee joins us for six months of the year to work on the Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Associations project.

This year, we welcomed Mr Ramiz Allafi, who is Country Value Team Lead-Immunology back home in Kazakhstan. Mr Allafi joins us to help with digital education and marketing needs on this particular project. In his first month, he hit the ground running by securing a meeting with the National Nursing Association of Kenya (NNAK) accompanied by Mr Sospeter Ndaba.

Mr Ndaba shared his delight at Mr Allafi getting to meet the ‘top brass’ of NNAK, “For me, the visit was special since it was the first association to which I was introducing our Johnson & Johnson secondee. I was elated that the National Chairman was present to welcome us. Apart from assuring us of his unwavering support for the project, he promised to give us a slot to present on the virtual



Mr Ramiz Allafi, 2018 J&J Secondee with staff from the Mwiki Private Medical Centre in Nairobi's Kasarani area during one of his assignments

resource platform (VRP) as a regional innovation during the 6th Quadrennial East Central & South Africa College of Nursing Conference to be hosted by NNAK in Nairobi in August 2018.”

Mr Allafi also shared his first impressions. He had only been in Nairobi for two weeks, and barely knew how to find his way around the city of Nairobi when he was honoured with this visit. He was excited to meet the first of the nine associations under the Strengthening Midwifery and Nursing Associations project. He noted that NNAK was a very big and well-organised

association, and as a VRP stakeholder, they are a vital partner because they currently have about 45,000 members. He is optimistic of the introduction of the VRP as it will bring the associations and their members closer together and elevate them to a new level of competence while opening up new opportunities across the region.

The NNAK national chairman was happy to receive the team of two, and expressed his desire for continued collaboration and development of healthcare through the project.

# Training day for associations

## *Supporting nurses to deliver universal health coverage*

By Sospeter Ndaba

While many people may have already been trained in generic concepts of results-based management and monitoring and evaluation systems, applying the theory in practical ways is often a challenge. Many individuals struggle with the very real problem of how to transform the several sheets of paper that contain a programme's results framework and indicators into a well-functioning system of data collection, analysis, interpretation, reporting and learning.

It is against this backdrop that SONAM-AKU in conjunction with the Aga Khan Foundation redesigned the aforementioned course to address various monitoring and evaluation challenges in the nursing and midwifery professions. Sound monitoring and evaluation systems are critical for helping nursing and midwifery professional associations understand the extent to which they have achieved what they intended to achieve.

Specifically, the course explored some of the foundations for designing and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems. This included the 10 steps of establishing a monitoring and evaluation system and results-based management approach. The course also explored topics such as defining results, developing and selecting key performance indicators, how to collect data and information, grouping indicators and developing output-monitoring tools.

The blended course was implemented between April and May 2018. Participants had one month to complete the online component, and thereafter attended a one-day face to face practical training course.

### Learning outcomes

Having completed this course, the learners were expected to be able to:

- Describe the guiding principles of sound monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Describe how to use results-based management to develop robust monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Describe how to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems in our units.

### Associations trained

The following nursing and midwifery professional associations were represented in the training.

1. UNMU - Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union
2. NMAU - National Midwives Association of Uganda
3. UPMA - Uganda Private Midwives Association
4. AGNMU - Association of Graduate Nurses & Midwives of Uganda
5. MAK - Midwives Association of Kenya
6. NNAK - National Nurses Association of Kenya
7. TANNA - Tanzania National Nurses Association
8. TAMA - Tanzania Midwives Association
9. ZANA - Zanzibar Nurses Association

### Participant profiles

COUNTRY	ASSOCIATION	MALE	FEMALE
Uganda	UNMU	1	3
	NMAU	1	3
	UPMA	2	3
	AGNMU	1	3
Kenya	MAK	1	2
	NNAK	3	2
Tanzania	TANNA	2	2
	TAMA	1	4
	ZANA	2	3
Total		14	26

"The training will help me derive a monitoring and evaluation plan for Maternal Neonatal Children and Adolescent Health Services for Kwale County, where I serve in the County Health Management Committee." **Mr Edward Mumbo, NNAK**

"The training will equip me with skills to design, implement and follow up midwifery projects." **Ms Hamida Mollel, TAMA**



Practical session during the training of Kenya nurses and midwives at AKU Nairobi on May 15, 2018

“I hope the workshop will encourage active participation and increased ownership of various association activities by members through follow-up on achieving expected results and coming up with remedial measures to bottlenecks in implementation.”  
**Mr Sospeter Ndaba,**  
**SONAM East Africa**  
**Project Manager**



Participants from Uganda nurses and midwives associations take part in group activities during the training at AKU Kampala on May 18, 2018

# Nursing stakeholders learn to use ‘VRP’

## *Nursing associations learn to use an open access virtual platform*

*By Martie Mtange*

Currently, AKU-SONAM and the Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust (JJCT) are leading a joint initiative, ‘Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Associations in East Africa’. The purpose of this phase of the initiative was to provide training to healthcare custodians from different nursing associations in East Africa on how to use the virtual resources platform (VRP). The VRP is an online platform that will enable SONAM to share educational materials, protocols and guidelines, research opportunities, scholarships, best practices and general information with nursing and midwifery association members. The platform will also allow associations to interact with each other digitally and share information.

The two-day workshop attracted more than 25

participants from SONAM, nursing and midwifery associations in East Africa, the Global Health Network and Johnson & Johnson secondees, as well as partners from North Star Alliance, Hand in Hand and ReaMedica Health. The training involved presentations from various attendees and breakout group sessions. The goal of the activities was to identify specific needs of the associations, and determine how to incorporate these needs into the VRP.

Mr Sospeter Ndaba works for the AKU as Project Manager, Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Associations in East Africa. Mr Ndaba and Ramiz Allafi, a JJCT secondee working with SONAM East Africa, coordinated the design and implementation of the training, which was held at Sunny Plaza on May 24-25.

Mr Ndaba shared that “The purpose of the workshop was to get feedback from representatives of nursing and midwifery associations from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania on the design and content of the virtual resource



JJCT representatives Mr Dimitri Bois and Ms Claudia Lanz smile for a picture

platform.” During the workshop, participants agreed on a framework for developing the platform including appointing a technical working group with members from the three East African countries. In addition, Mr Ndaba said, “I am happy to say that the platform has been chosen as a success story in the upcoming East, Central and Southern Africa College of Nursing conference in Nairobi in August 2018.”

Mr Allafi was particularly excited by the event. He said, “For me, participating in the workshop was more than just facilitating an event. I met people who have different perspectives on nursing. This strengthened my understanding of the real situation and needs on the ground. What excited me the most was seeing their passion to improve the healthcare in East Africa through the VRP. They see the platform as a great opportunity to contribute to the well-being of patients in East Africa.”

Ms Helen Oluka, Vice chairperson of the National Midwives Association of Uganda, participated in the training session. She seemed hopeful after the training and shared that, “My expectation is that this platform will enable most of the nurses to participate by accessing information, exchanging ideas and consultation so that they can improve service delivery. I expect many nurses to start using this network immediately.”

Ms Loveluck Mwash, Vice Chairperson of the Tanzania Midwives Association and senior instructor at SONAM Tanzania, echoed Helen’s sentiments. Ms Mwash said, “This training is very important for us because as an association, we have a responsibility to advocate for midwives as well as women and children who are the major consumers of our services.



Participants getting ready before the first presentation



Participants pose for a photo in SONAM Kenya’s library

As an association, we have a responsibility to ensure that we are helping and building capacity for our midwives, even those who are in the remote parts of our country.”

Several participants had positive reports to share regarding the training session, and many seemed hopeful that the VRP would bring

nurses together across the East Africa region. The objectives of the training were consistent with the vision of the partnership between SONAM-AKU and JJCCT, which seeks to improve nurse education and training in East Africa. Similarly, it is great to see nursing leaders and educators embracing digital spaces.

# Working towards universal healthcare coverage for Africa

## *How SONAM will help further the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal #3*

By *Nepurko Keiwua*

In early April 2018, Professor Sharon Brownie, Dean SONAM East Africa, and Professor Constance Shumba, adjunct faculty SONAM East Africa and Global Advisor-Health for the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), were invited to the World Health Organization, Africa headquarters (WHO AfRO) offices in Brazzaville, Congo for a meeting. The main aim of the meeting was exploring areas of collaboration for the two organisations. This exploratory visit is the first of several that will eventually see the WHO's regional framework towards universal healthcare coverage (UHC) and the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health (HRH) unpacked and disseminated. These two aspects are linchpins in ensuring that Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #3 is achieved sooner rather than later. SDG #3 is focused on ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages.

I was able to ask Professor Shumba to share a little bit more about the meeting with the WHO, and what it means for the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and SONAM in particular.

### *What is the significance of the meeting between WHO AfRO and AKDN?*

The establishment of the AfRO office in Brazzaville was a historic occurrence. In the early years, AfRO focused on research and training of medical personnel, and had a strong vision to develop public health programmes. In many ways,



From left: Professor Constance Shumba, AKF; Dr Prosper Tumusiime, WHO AfRO; Professor Sharon Brownie, SONAM East Africa; and Dr Delanyo Dovlo, WHO AfRO

this resonates with the AKDN approach in the countries where we work. AKDN is a trailblazer in setting up and supporting high quality health services and systems in African countries. AKDN's work in health complements efforts by AfRO, governments and development partners to achieve UHC through workforce development, health research and implementation of large-scale public health programmes. Of great significance is the fact that like WHO, AKDN delivers its work in partnership with governments and communities in rural and remote areas in some of the poorest countries in Africa. Our visit was also historic and affirmed the AKDN's important role in health on the continent. The AKDN's long-term approach to holistic development ensures that we leave a mark that cannot be erased, and truly make a difference to the lives of women and children in Africa.

### *Please describe your experience while at WHO AfRO and how the objectives laid out will be achieved.*

We were well-received at the WHO AfRO office, and it was evident that a great deal of planning and mobilisation had gone into preparing for this meeting on the WHO's part. The main objective was to explore collaboration between WHO/AfRO (Health Systems and Services cluster and Service Delivery and Systems unit) and AKDN in the context of the WHO regional framework of action toward UHC and the Africa regional implementation framework of the Global Strategy on HRH. We shared the work of both organisations and discussed issues and challenges on health workforce capacity development in the region, aiming to improve quality of health services consistent with the WHO strategy in HRH and Action framework for UHC. We explored areas for collaboration including: strengthening district health systems; evidence, research and innovation; and training and capacity development in support of AKDN's broader integrated health system in the region. A major take away message from the visit was that we need to rightly frame our contributions to the attainment of UHC in our geographies, which is the current global push, as we are already contributing immensely to this.

Over the next few weeks we will further develop and prioritise the areas of collaboration, providing a specific roadmap that outlines details and timelines. WHO AfRO will also undertake visits to SONAM and AKF public health programmes. We will continue to explore mutual exchange of expertise on specific areas between AKDN and WHO through quarterly interactions using various modes. We will continue to grow the partnership through mutual exchange. This partnership gives credibility, positions us as recognised thought leaders and influencers in health on the continent and will assist us to enhance the quality of our academic and field health programmes.

The proposed partnership between AKF, SONAM and WHO AfRO is a vital cog in the machinery that will eventually help us realise SDG #3 to **ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages**.

# Celebrating Nursing in Nyeri

## *International Nursing Day celebrations in Nyeri*

*By Esther Nderitu*

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) chose the theme ‘**Nurses: A Voice to Lead, Health is a Human Right**’ for International Nurses Day 2018! This day is celebrated by nurses all over the world with the theme chosen by ICN.

In Kenya, nurses from all over the country usually assemble in one county to launch the activities of the week leading to International Nurses Day. This year, the assembly was in Kakamega, followed by celebrations in the county of Nyeri. The ceremony was held at the grounds of the Outspan School of Nursing, a private school in Nyeri. The rain was not going to ruin our special day!

Several nurses and nursing leaders from different counties and various nursing associations, nursing unions, the East Central and Southern Africa College of Nursing and the Nursing Council of Kenya attended the celebrations in Nyeri. I am proud to say that among these were some Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH) nurses, and one AKU faculty member as well as some alumni. Among the travelling alumni were two Bachelor of Science in Nursing 2015 graduates from Kisumu, Ms Mildred Oluoch and Ms Violet Opete. As we talked, they seemed nostalgic about their experience as students from Kisumu. Their cohort was particularly special because many had received the opportunity to go to school as a result of Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust scholarships and additional support from AKUH-Kisumu. Mildred and Violet reflected on how they enjoyed connecting with other colleagues and nursing leaders and staying up-to-date with the relevant nursing trends in the country.

The chief guest was the Kenya chairperson of the Parliamentary Health Committee and MP for Murang’a, Ms Sabina Chege. Baringo county women’s representative, Ms Gladwell Tungo, also graced the occasion. The day’s activities included a free session on health education by nurses at the Kamukunji stadium in Nyeri, as well as a five-kilometre walk across town in a procession full of nurses. It was exciting because we were in outfits of different colours. However, we had one thing in common: the nursing theme was embroidered on the backs of our shirts. This was to remind everyone of their right to health and to reassure them that the nursing community is committed to providing quality healthcare

services. As a renewal of our vows to serve, we held a beautiful candle-lighting ceremony.

Nurses from different parts of the country were recognised for attending. For many, it was time for fellowship with each other and a welcome break from patients and busy schedules. For Ms Opete and Ms Oluoch, it was a wonderful first-time visit to Nyeri. In their words, “We appreciate the cold weather and experience of being on the mountain during this rainy season.”



From left: Ms Mildred Oluoch, Ms Esther Nderitu and Ms Violet Opete take a picture after arriving in Nyeri



Ms Esther Nderitu and Ms Dorcas Akoya Amunga (SONAM alumni) renew their vows to serve as nurses by lighting their candles



Nurses gather for a photo at the end of the celebration

# Bridging the gap in healthcare access with technology

## *SONAM East Africa shares advances made in healthcare innovation and access at Africa Health*

By Nepurko Keiwua

Professor Sharon Brownie, Dean of the Aga Khan University's School of Nursing and Midwifery was in attendance at the Africa Health Exhibition and Congress in South Africa this week. Technology advances were on display as healthcare professionals from all disciplines were given the opportunity to see the latest healthcare technologies, products, equipment while networking with peers and colleagues across the region.

Professor Brownie, attended as an invited speaker and gave a presentation on the Use of Mobile Phone Services in Nursing. Recent convergence of technology with nursing education and practice has helped increase the accessibility to nursing educations and improved healthcare access – bringing services closer to those that need them the most. In her presentation, Professor Brownie, shared details on how the Aga Khan School of Nursing and Midwifery in East Africa is using technology to maintain links with alumni. The full details of this effort can be found in this study here:

Mwizerwa, J., Robb, W., Namukwaya, C., Namuguzi, M. & Brownie, S. (2017). *Improving Response Rates to an Alumni Survey*

*in East Africa*. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* <http://dx.doi.org/10.14738/assrj.420.3742>

She also went on to showcase the use of online based learning platforms such as Moodle, which enable students to access educational materials anywhere at any time, and are revolutionizing how SONAM EA students continue to learn and upgrade their skills. Professor Brownie also reported on an innovative interprofessional project she is engaged with in the development of Midwife Sonographers. The project led by Dr Sudhir Vinayak, Head of Radiology at Aga Khan University Hospital and Principal Researcher, prepares midwives to perform obstetrics ultrasounds in rural and remote areas where women come for standard antenatal care. Following the training of midwife sonographers, mothers are able to access much needed pre-natal ultrasound services at centers far from the hospital. Mobile phone technology is then used to transmit

images and findings back to the base hospital where specialist radiologists verify results in a turn-around time of no more than 15 minutes. For a comprehensive outlook on this project you can read the studies here:

Vinayak, S. & Brownie S. (2018). *Collaborative task-sharing to enhance the Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) access among expectant women in Kenya: The role of midwife sonographers*. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*. Early-on-line <https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820.2018.1470499>

Vinayak, S., Sande, J., Nisenbaum, H., & Nolsøe, C. P. (2017). *Training Midwives to Perform Basic Obstetric Point-of-Care Ultrasound in Rural Areas Using a Tablet Platform and Mobile Phone Transmission Technology—A WFUMB COE Project*. *Ultrasound in Medicine & Biology*, 43(10), 2125-2132. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ultrasmedbio.2017.05.024>



Professor Sharon Brownie with Dr Sudhir Vinayak at Africa Health

# Building cancer research in the region

## Visit to SONAM Kenya by Dr Margaret Barton-Burke

By Nepurko Keiwua

Dr Margaret Barton-Burke, the immediate former President of the Oncology Nursing Society and the Director, Nursing Research at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in the US was in Kenya. She was here ahead of the first annual Breast Cancer Symposium to provide mentorship and guidance to faculty members and research specialists working under the Beginning Investigator Grant for Catalytic Research (BIG CAT) project. As I sat in on her session with Ms Diana Kassaman, Ms Tayreez Mushani and Mr Peterson Kiraithe, I took note of the general tips and gentle guidance she gave them during the data collection stage of their study, *Exploring Health Literacy Levels of Women Diagnosed with Cervical and/or Breast Cancers in Kenya*.

During her visit she donated a copy of her book, *2018 Oncology Nursing Drug Handbook* to the AKU Library in Nairobi. Dr Barton-Burke and her co-author have been updating this text since the 1990s. This new edition has additional chapters on molecular and immunologic/biologic targeted therapies, as well as updated information on new drugs and their indications. The book will be available for reference immediately to all SONAM Kenya students.

When I asked what prompted her to donate the text, she responded that since SONAM-AKU is working to



From left: Mr Peterson Kiraithe, SONAM Kenya research specialist; Dr Margaret Barton-Burke, co-author of the Oncology Nursing Drug Handbook; Ms Tayreez Mushani; and Ms Diana Kassaman, SONAM Kenya faculty

improve oncology nursing in the region, she could support the effort by making quality reference materials available. She also noted that oncology nursing affords patients and their families a different quality of care than has been the norm in the recent past. Dr Barton-Burke added that the oncology content and knowledge base has grown immensely over the last 40 years, and this has led to improved oncology nursing education and practice. With regular donations of materials such as these, low resource countries like Kenya are able to continue giving nurses access to quality learning materials. In addition to the text, Dr Barton-Burke donated teaching aids for use in the Skills Lab.

We would like to say *Asante Sana* to Dr Barton-Burke for her thoughtful donation, and recognise her continued support of the Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing programme here at SONAM-AKU.



Dr Barton-Burke (far-right) stresses a point to BIG CAT principal investigator, Ms Diana Kassaman, as team members, Ms Tayreez Mushani and Mr Peterson Kiraithe, look on and contribute

# The fight against breast cancer

## *AKUH and AKU breast Cancer Symposium*

*By Martie Mtange*

When I attended the Breast Cancer Symposium that was held April 19–20, 2018, I was immediately confronted with challenges such as those faced by healthcare practitioners every day.

I had settled into a comfortable chair on the extreme right side of the room, and there was a large screen in front of me. On this screen was an image of two breasts that had been devoured by cancerous cells. I tried to be strong, and stared for a full minute before I returned my gaze to the speaker on the podium, Dr Vikki Mango. I could not stomach it. After a quick sweep of the room to investigate whether anyone else was as traumatised as I was by the image, I realised that I was in a room full of pathologists, general practitioners, nurses, radiologists, surgeons, oncologists and many other kinds of healthcare practitioners. This was nothing new to them. They had first-hand knowledge of the destruction cancer can inflict on the human body and had dedicated their lives to providing services in support of people challenged by cancerous disease

The Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH) Nairobi

partnered with the AKU to host the region's first Breast Cancer Symposium. The symposium focused on updating the healthcare community on ways of managing breast cancer, and is expected to be an annual event. Other organisations, such as the Ministry of Health, National Institutes of Health-Kenya, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the Union for International Cancer Control, and the MD Anderson Cancer Center sent representatives to the two-day event held at the Trademark Hotel. Attendees were part of themed presentations, interactive workshop sessions, breakout sessions and case study reflections that helped to enhance their knowledge on current best practices in managing breast cancer.

AKU-SONAM assistant professor, Ms Tayreez Mushani, presented on oncology nursing on the first day of the symposium. Her presentation came after previous speakers had stressed the fact that there are very few specialty oncology practitioners, meaning it was becoming increasingly difficult to deliver specialised care to patients with cancer. Ms Mushani offered a ray of hope with her talk on the development of an oncology nursing programme in Kenya. She shared SONAM's reason behind establishing an oncology nursing programme and the opportunities the programme has presented to the healthcare community and patients with cancer.



Ms Tayreez Mushani presenting during the symposium

I settled down to have some tea during the break after the first round of sessions with Joyce Marete and Felix Omare. They were at the symposium to further their understanding of oncology from the perspective of recent graduates from SONAM's oncology nursing programme. "For me, one of my lessons is learning from the images in the slides from the presentation," said Ms Marete during the break. I was curious because the images had traumatised me, yet here was someone else seemingly learning from the same. What did she mean? "The presentations on how they're doing the CT (computed tomography) scans help me connect what I see doctors doing in the hospital with what we are taught in class." For Ms Marete, it was an inside-look into what she sees the doctors she works with at AKUH Nairobi practise, as well as building an understanding of why what they do is important to patients with cancer. For me, it was a difficult introduction to the effects of cancer, while for her it was the explanation she had been looking for.

Towards the end of the first day, I found myself recipient of invaluable must-know information for lay persons such as myself. From 3:30 pm, Ms Mushani and Dr Margaret Burton-Burke (former President of the Oncology Nursing Society) as well as a few of SONAM's oncology nursing alumni conducted sessions where they taught participants how to carry out breast cancer examinations. There were breast models on four different tables, with an instructor at each table to facilitate the examinations.

Participants were taken through practical steps on how to self-examine for lumps, as well as how to check for lumps on their loved ones. It was a very productive session because breast cancer is often seen as a death sentence and the focus is on the patient as a victim. In this case, Ms Mushani and her team of capable instructors taught us how to prepare as individuals in the event we are faced with the possibility of breast cancer, by learning how to detect it ourselves.

During the symposium, I learned that Kenya has among the highest rates of breast cancer mortality on the African continent. I also learned that breast cancer, according to the Lancet research group, is responsible for 7 per cent of deaths in Kenya. The last thing I learned was that inasmuch as breast cancer largely affects women, it is more lethal when a man suffers from it. A man is more likely to die as a result of breast cancer than a woman, even if it is detected at the same stage.

It was a day full of learning and progressive conversations on how to manage the calamity that breast cancer represents. More than anything, I left the symposium hopeful; first because there is already a team of people who are dedicated to fighting breast cancer and saving more lives, and second because at SONAM, we are preparing more nurses to keep on fighting.



Dr Margaret Burton-Burke taking participants through a breast examination



Participants going through an examination session



Instructors prepare participants to administer a breast exam



From left: Ms Tayreez Mushani and Ms Joyce Marete take participants through a practical session

# The fight against cancer goes on

## *Cancer experts partner for the ChemoSafe project*

*By Martie Mtange*

A collaboration involving the AKU, the Nairobi Hospital, the National Cancer Institute of Kenya (NCI) and the Kenya Hospices and Palliative Care Association has provided advanced training to healthcare professionals working with patients with cancer.

Over 20 healthcare practitioners from across Kenya were present at Nairobi Hospital's Anderson Centre during the weeklong course. The course was part of the ChemoSafe project, and was the first such session in the East Africa region. The project seeks to promote safe handling and administration of

chemotherapy, as well as quality service provision to patients with cancer.

Ms Tayreez Mushani, assistant professor at SONAM East Africa, was one of the course faculty, along with a number of educators from various institutions.

Ms Mushani said, "The training has brought public, private, faith-based and external actors in the healthcare space together, which is so rare. I'm happy to have been a part of making this happen."

The training's objectives are consistent with the goals of the Kenyan Health Ministry's National Cancer Control Strategy, which calls for efforts to improve the skills of health professionals treating cancer.

Faculty from the Oncology Nursing Society, the American Cancer Society and the University of



Dr Alfred Karagu leads a discussion session

North Carolina also served as guest facilitators over several sittings. They took participants through various facets of cancer care and newer ways of delivering quality care to patients with cancer.

During the opening ceremony, Dr Alfred Karagu, NCI CEO shared that “The training is to ensure that we are all aligned in delivering chemotherapy care,

particularly as healthcare professionals.”

Chemotherapy is one of the main features of SONAM’s Higher Diploma in Oncology Nursing. Ms Mushani was part of the core team that conceived this training. Two other alumni from SONAM’s oncology nursing programme, Joyce Marete and Immaculate Wambugu, also conducted sessions during the event.



Facilitators and participants pose for a group photo



Participants pose for a group photo with oncology nursing alumnus, Ms Joyce Marete (far right)



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