



آغا خان یونیورسٹی
THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF NURSING
AND MIDWIFERY

THE SONAM TIMES

Newsletter | JANUARY - JUNE 2026

Inaugural Issue | Volume 1 - Issue 1



The Aga Khan School of Nursing

آغا خان نرسنگ اسکول

In this Edition

Message from the Dean	1
Collaborations & Outreach	2
Key Events and Engagements	6
Capacity Building Initiatives	12
Accomplishments	14
Stories of our People	21
Promotions & Appointments	22



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



I am delighted to welcome you to the very first edition of 'The SONAM Times' newsletter. This edition is special - it covers six months of work, milestones, and momentum, and sets the foundation for what will follow as a regular quarterly publication. There is much to share, and I hope you will find it worth your time.

The health of any nation depends on the strength of its healthcare workforce, and at the centre of that workforce are nurses and midwives. AKU-SONAM took several significant steps this period that reflect its commitment to that truth. We celebrated International Nurses and Midwives Day with national visibility on television and digital media & print media, and in rooms where policy is shaped. We stood alongside global peers at the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) Triennial Congress in Lisbon.

The most significant development, however, was the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Government of Sindh to expand nursing education to Tando Muhammad Khan. Our students remained innovative, faculty grew professionally, and the institution was represented with distinction on international stages.

AKU-SONAM was founded on the belief that nursing education, done right, changes lives and strengthens nations. This edition reflects on how that belief is being put into practice - and on the work that remains ahead. Happy reading!

Dr Salimah R. Walani
Dean, AKU-SONAM, Pakistan

COLLABORATIONS & OUTREACH

AKU and Sindh Govt launch historic nursing partnership

Pakistan currently has five nurses per 10,000 people — a ratio that is especially strained in remote areas. This agreement addressed that critical shortage.

On April 4, 2026, Dean Dr Walani, on behalf of the Aga Khan University signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Sindh, in collaboration with the Department of Health and the District Commissioner's Office in Tando Muhammad Khan. The collaboration is set to support the delivery of a Bachelor of Science in the Nursing programme, expanding access to quality nursing education in rural Sindh.

To read the complete article [[Click here](#)]



Global Ismaili Health Professionals Conference 2026 in Houston

Princess Zahra Aga Khan, AKU Pro-Chancellor, joined the 2026 Global Ismaili Health Professionals Conference as Special Guest of Honour in Houston, where she highlighted the critical role of health in driving human development and improving quality of life.

Under the theme “Healthcare Innovation Through Partnerships: Bridging Global Health Challenges,” the conference brought together health professionals from the Ismaili community around the world to connect, collaborate, and contribute to the future of healthcare.



Over 105 alumni from the AKU-SONAM, PK were in attendance, underscoring the University's strong global community and influence in the health sector. Dean Dr Walani, on behalf of AKU engaged directly with the alumni and discussed how they could contribute meaningfully to AKU's mission going forward.

The conference also featured contributions from President Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin and several other AKU healthcare leaders. Dr Shahabuddin reflected on the journey of building academic medical centres in the AKDN health system. [\[Click here\]](#) to watch the highlights of the day.

Expanding outreach for student enrollment

AKU-SONAM conducted a series of outreach and awareness sessions to engage prospective students and healthcare professionals on academic pathways, career progression, research, evidence-based practice, and higher education. AKU-SONAM introduced the BScN & MScN programmes, positioning nursing as a future-ready career in the different institutions of Karachi.

Moreover, Team AKU-SONAM visited different colleges in Lahore on February 13-14, 2026, and engaged with students and nursing professionals to explore career pathways in clinical specialization, leadership, academia, and research.



Engaging future students and families

The AKU Connect 2026 brought together students, parents, and teachers to explore academic pathways and opportunities at AKU. The event offered an engaging and informative experience through interactive sessions, expert interactions, and insights into the skills that distinguish AKU alumni.

Participants explored the MScN and BScN programmes, the on-campus life at AKU, and engaged with interactive exhibits across the university. The strong turnout and active participation contributed to a vibrant and successful event.

World Health Summit in Nairobi

In April 2026, more than 2,000 leaders, innovators, and health professionals gathered at the World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2026. The event was gloriously hosted by AKU-Medical College East Africa under the leadership of Dean Dr Lukoye Atwoli.

The gathering moved beyond dialogue. Agreements were signed, MoUs were formalized, and concrete commitments were made to redesign health systems across the African continent. Dean Dr Walani represented AKU-SONAM at the summit.



SONAM at the 34th ICM Triennial Congress

AKU-SONAM faculty participated in the 34th International Confederation of Midwives Triennial Congress in Lisbon - the largest midwifery gathering in the world.

Our faculty including the team of Dr Rafat Jan, Kiran Mubeen, Sadia Karimi, and Farzana Yameen presented and engaged across sessions, along with a lactation workshop for midwives hailing from multiple countries, demonstrating AKU-SONAM's contribution to global midwifery education and practice. Dean Dr Walani represented AKU-SONAM at the conference.

AKU-SONAM also acknowledges the support of the AKU Centre for Medical Innovation and Laerdal Global Health in advancing simulation-based learning and professional development at the Congress.

KEY EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENTS

International Nurses & Midwives Day 2026: Recognizing a profession at the forefront of healthcare

As health systems contend with workforce shortages globally, rising patient demand, and mounting pressure to sustain quality care, AKU-SONAM in partnership with the Aga Khan University Hospital Division of Nursing Services, marked International Nurses and Midwives Day on May 7, 2026.

The event centred on the indispensable role nurses and midwives play in strengthening Pakistan's healthcare landscape.



Health care leaders, educators, policymakers, students, and nursing and midwifery professionals gathered to acknowledge a profession that had long surpassed the boundaries of traditional care. Nurses and midwives today lead in clinical practice, education, research, policy, health system management, and innovation.

The event drew a strong turnout and featured an interactive online quiz, leadership roundtable discussions, guest speaker sessions, and student cultural performances.

Continued on next page...

Inaugural AKU Nursing & Midwifery Excellence Awards, Pakistan 2026

A defining moment of the International Nurses & Midwives Day's celebration was the recognition of individuals who demonstrated exceptional leadership and impact in nursing and midwifery. AKU-SONAM, PK and AKUH presented the following awards. These awards reflect a shared institutional commitment to advancing nursing and midwifery through education, research, clinical excellence, and service.

Early Career Nursing and Midwifery Excellence Award



Ms Rabab Vadivala
Clinical Nurse, Pediatric Nursing,
Aga Khan University Hospital

Distinguished Nursing Award



Ms Alia Nasir
Principal and Associate Professor, Rufayda
Hamdard College of Nursing

Excellence in Midwifery Practice Award



Dr Arusa Lakhani
Associate Professor and Director Graduate
Education, AKU-SONAM, PK



Nursing and midwifery in national conversations

The visibility of nursing and midwifery in Pakistan's public discourse grew significantly around this year's International Nurses & Midwives Day observance. Dean Dr Walani was featured on [PTV] and [GEO TV] in a segment on the importance of nursing in Pakistan and appeared as a guest on [BOL TV] and AAJ TV morning shows on International Nurses Day 2026, where she spoke on the urgent need to strengthen the nursing and midwifery workforce in the country. Both appearances aired live on national television.

Mehak Virani, Instructor, AKU-SONAM, PK, also appeared as a guest on [GTV]'s morning show, where she spoke on the depth of training & education that defines the profession.

Convocation 2025

AKU-SONAM celebrated its graduates as they marked the culmination of their academic journeys and prepared to enter the professional world.

In 2025, a total of 188 students graduated across programmes, including 4 PhD, 27 MScN, 143 BScN, and 14 Post-RN BScN graduates - reflecting the AKU-SONAM's continued contribution & commitment to developing skilled nursing and healthcare professionals.



Board of Trustees' Visit to SONAM

Members of the Board of Trustees visited AKU-SONAM on January 20, 2026. During the visit, AKU-SONAM management shared its progress made in 2025, and outlined its future plans. The Trustees also interacted with the SONAM leadership team, faculty, and students, and toured the campus.





Welcoming 2026 with our 3rd #RiseWithConfidence event

The AKU-SONAM campus came alive with energy and enthusiasm as students geared up for the new semester. The #RiseWithConfidence Student Energizer 2026 brought the new cohort together with high energy, engagement, and shared excitement.

Designed to kick-start the academic journey, the event set a positive tone - encouraging connection, confidence, and a strong sense of belonging, enabling students to Rise With Confidence as they begin the semester ahead.

Alumni Reunion 2026

AKU-SONAM organized its annual Alumni Reunion on January 15, 2026, at the Rufayda Courtyard at AKU-SONAM. The gathering brought alumni together to reconnect, revisit shared experiences, and spend meaningful time with peers and mentors, leaving participants with renewed connections and lasting memories.

[\[Click here\]](#) to see the Highlights.



The occasion was honored by the gracious presence of Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin, President, AKU and Dr Afaf Meleis, Member, Board of Trustees, alongside members of the AKU-SONAM's senior leadership, whose participation further enriched the celebration.





Leadership and inspiration at the Ziauddin School of Nursing convocation

Dean Dr Walani was invited as the Chief Guest at the Convocation Ceremony of Ziauddin University. Her presence at the occasion reflected the growing recognition of nursing leadership in shaping the trajectory of healthcare education in Pakistan.

During her address, Dr Walani encouraged graduates to be bold, proud to be nurses, and lifelong learners, while advocating for themselves, the nursing profession, and their patients.

Contributing to DHLT 2026

Dean Dr Salimah R. Walani was invited as a speaker at the Developing Healthcare Leaders for Tomorrow 2026 programme, which equips healthcare leaders with the skills and tools to lead effectively in an evolving healthcare landscape.

During an engaging session with over 200 faculty and staff from AKU, Aga Khan Health Services, and French Medical Institute for Children, she shared insights on leading change, managing complexity, and engaging stakeholders. She emphasized that impactful leaders are driven by a clear sense of purpose and inspire their teams to create meaningful and lasting change.



CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES



Building research capacity at AKU-SONAM

The AKU-SONAM Research team organized a research webinar, “Navigating Predatory Journals: Tools and Institutional Support,” on June 5, 2026. Facilitated by Ms Esther Muthoni, Copyright Specialist, the session was attended by approximately 65 participants from SONAM and across AKU.

Advancing Research Through Knowledge Synthesis: Systematic Review Workshop

AKU-SONAM organized a two-day Systematic Review Research Workshop on February 6-7, 2026 - which involved deep learning, sharp inquiry, and rigorous thinking.

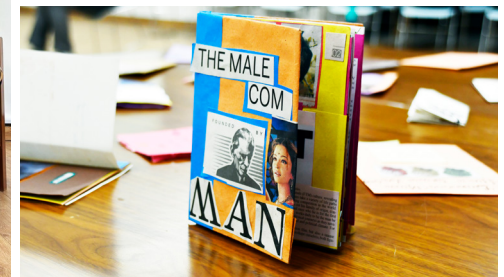
Led by Dr Salima Meherali, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta, and our visiting faculty, the workshop brought together faculty, PhD scholars, and early-career researchers to strengthen skills in evidence synthesis, critical appraisal, and protocol development - building capacity for high-impact research.



Masculinity Against Rigid Definitions

AKU-SONAM organized a five-day in-person training on February 9-13, 2026, following a four-week online module on January 5-26, 2026, as part of the hybrid program of Men, Boys and Masculinity titled Masculinity Against Rigid Definitions (MARD).

The program critically explored how masculinity is socially constructed, culturally reinforced, and often narrowly defined, particularly within the Pakistani context.



The program created a safe space for unlearning, reimagining, and collectively developing alternative frameworks that promote gender equality, fluidity, and healthier expressions of masculinity.



AYE Summer Camp

The AYE (Activism. Youth. Equality) Summer Camp 2026 took place on June 11–12, 2026, at AKU-SONAM, PK. The camp brought together young people for structured conversations around equality, leadership, advocacy, and social impact.

The initiative is part of the Men, Boys and Masculinities / MARD programme, delivered in collaboration with GRÓ Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme Alumni and the University of Iceland. Both initiatives were made possible through the leadership of Sarmad Soomar, Director Research, AKU-SONAM, whose efforts drove the collaboration from concept to execution.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Students' Accomplishments

Celebrating Research Excellence

Three MScN graduates represented AKU-SONAM at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, and the Sindh Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases Annual Symposium, with Qurat ul Ain Virani earning the Runner-Up Award for Best Research Poster, a proud reflection of how we Rise With Confidence.



SONAM Shines at the B2R

Our BScN student, Salma Nazar, secured 8th position, finishing in the Top 10 at the Born to Run Women's Power Run. A true reflection of resilience, discipline, and determination. Efforts like these makes AKU-SONAM proud.

SONAM takes the lead on water

SONAM shines at the 18th Annual Karachi Boat Club International Inter-School Regatta 2026 as our BScN Year IV students rowed their way to victory. Tanzila Khan powered through the 2x1000m relay, while Nazia Hassan led the charge in the 4x500m relay, securing well-earned victories.



Flying high at the 13th Annual Deans' Cricket Tournament

AKU-SONAM proudly participated in the 13th Annual Deans' Cricket Tournament, organized by AKU Student Affairs and the AKU Students' Sports Society. The BScN women's team emerged as tournament champions, while the BScN men's team secured the runner-up position after a thrilling final.



The tournament concluded with an exciting finale attended by the Deans of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Medical College, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, celebrating sportsmanship, teamwork, and the vibrant spirit of OneAKU. [\[Click here\]](#) to catch the highlights from the day.

Spiking success at the PNEC NUST Olympiad

Proud moment for AKU-SONAM, as our BScN students, as part of the volleyball team, spiked their way to Runner-Up at the Pakistan Navy Engineering College National University of Sciences & Technology Olympiad. This demonstrates how our future nurses shine both on the court and beyond the classroom.



SONAM students driving healthcare innovation

Team AKU-SONAM Wellbeing Warriors team secured third place at the Rufayda Anti-Burnout Hackathon 2026 in Karachi, earning PKR 100,000 for their entry: REVIVE — an application designed to detect and flag burnout risk among healthcare professionals.

This project addresses a well-documented gap in healthcare workforce support and demonstrates AKU-SONAM students' capacity to address systemic challenges with practical, technology-driven solutions.



From Karachi to Greece - one student, one extraordinary opportunity

Adnan Wazir, a final-year BScN student at AKU-SONAM, PK, has been selected for the Erasmus+ Exchange Programme at the International Hellenic University, Greece.

Through this prestigious European academic initiative, Adnan has been immersed in international nursing education, diverse healthcare systems, and cross-cultural learning experiences that go far beyond the classroom.



Faculty Accomplishments

Honoring Excellence: Sitara-e-Pakistan Award



Professor Dr Tazeen Ali, Professor, AKU-SONAM has been conferred the Sitara-e-Pakistan Award by the Patient Protection Society in recognition of her exceptional service, leadership, and contributions to nursing education and healthcare.

Welcomin Lactation Consultancy Certification



AKU-SONAM congratulates Sadia Karimi, Senior Instructor on successfully passing the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant examination, marking an important professional milestone in her clinical and academic practice.

A spotlight on Excellence: Faculty Award Ceremony

Faculty, parents, and students gathered for the AKU Awards Ceremony on January 16, 2026, for an evening dedicated to recognizing distinguished performance. Students and faculty were honored for their achievements in an atmosphere of pride, applause, and shared joy.

The event celebrated excellence and acknowledged our faculty members for their outstanding dedication, impact, and performance.



Awards for Excellence in Teaching 2025

Outstanding Teacher Award Graduate Nursing Education



Dr Laila Ladak
Associate Professor &
Associate Dean,
AKU-SONAM, PK

Outstanding Teacher Award Undergraduate Nursing Education



Dr Syeda Naghma Rizvi
Assistant Professor,
AKU-SONAM, PK

Research Award



Sarmad M. Soomar
Senior Instructor & Director
Research,
AKU-SONAM, PK

Exceptional Early Career Teaching Award



Madrika Mirza Kanjiani
Instructor,
AKU-SONAM, PK

Improving Research Capacity

Dr Saima Sachwani and Ms Zahira Amirali completed the Research Initiative for Scholars Excellence Programme, strengthening their research and grant-writing competencies through structured learning, mentorship, and scholarly presentations.



Earning PhD

Dr Ambreen Gowani, Senior Instructor, successfully completed her PhD in Nursing from the University of Alberta, Canada, in April 2026.



Dr Yasmin Amarsi awarded the title of Dean Emerita

AKU conferred the title of Dean Emerita on Dr Yasmin Amarsi in recognition of her distinguished leadership and enduring contributions to the University and the nursing profession.

A pioneering nursing leader and former Dean of the School of Nursing, Pakistan, and Founding Dean of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, East Africa, Dr Amarsi has played a transformative role in advancing nursing education across the Aga Khan Development Network.



Alumni Accomplishments



The first armed forces nurse to attain a PhD degree from AKU-SONAM

AKU-SONAM proudly celebrates a historic milestone as Lieutenant Colonel Dr Shagufta Parveen becomes the first nurse from the Pakistan Armed Forces to earn a PhD (Class of 2025) from the School.

Currently serving at the Armed Forces Post Graduate Medical Institute, College of Nursing Rawalpindi, Dr Parveen's achievement reflects AKU-SONAM's commitment to advancing nursing education, leadership, and research, while strengthening the capacity of the nursing profession at the national level.

Distinguished Alumni Award 2025

AKU-SONAM proudly congratulates its alumna, Dr Zeenat Sulaiman Khan (Registered Nurse, 1987), Regional Chief Executive Officer, Aga Khan Health Services, East Africa, and Global Head of Quality, Clinical Programmes and Projects, Aga Khan Health Services, on receiving the Founder's Day Awards of Distinction 2025 – Distinguished Alumni Award. The award recognizes her exceptional leadership and outstanding contributions to healthcare.



STORIES OF OUR PEOPLE

AKU-SONAM Alumna responds to critical in-flight emergency

An in-flight medical emergency aboard a flight from Toronto to Abu Dhabi in August 2025 prompted a swift and courageous response from Erum Iqbal (MScN 2012), an AKU-SONAM alumna and Registered Nurse in the Mental Health Programme at Scarborough Health Network's General Hospital, Canada.

Her extensive nursing career prepared Erum to respond confidently to emergencies, even while in the sky. [\[Read More\]](#)



PROMOTIONS & APPOINTMENTS

Visiting Faculty Appointments



Dr Gulzar Malik

Associate Professor and
Associate Dean,
International Partnerships,
La Trobe University, Melbourne



Dr Rozmeen Shivji

Assistant Professor and
Program Director,
Rush University College of
Nursing, Chicago



Dr Salima Meherali

Associate Professor,
Faculty of Nursing,
University of Alberta, Edmonton



Dr Shairose Premji

Professor and Sally Smith Chair
in Nursing,
Queen's University, Kingston,
Ontario

Adjunct Faculty Appointments



Khairunnissa Hooda

Chief Nursing Officer,
Aga Khan University Hospital,
Pakistan



Dr Zohra Hasnani-Samnani

Interprofessional Education Clinical
Specialist,
Qatar University, Doha

Faculty Promotions



Dr Arusa Lakhani

Promoted to
Associate Professor



Dr Sehrish Sajjad

Promoted to
Assistant Professor

still feel like missing out?



dean.akusonam@aku.edu



+92 21 – 3486 5406



<https://www.aku.edu/sonampk/>



[/AKUSONAMPK](https://www.facebook.com/AKUSONAMPK)



[/akusonam_pk](https://www.instagram.com/akusonam_pk)



[@AKUSONAMPK](https://www.youtube.com/@AKUSONAMPK)



[/company/akusonampk](https://www.linkedin.com/company/akusonampk)