



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY



NURSES AND LEADERS IN HEALTHCARE IN EAST AFRICA MIDWIVES



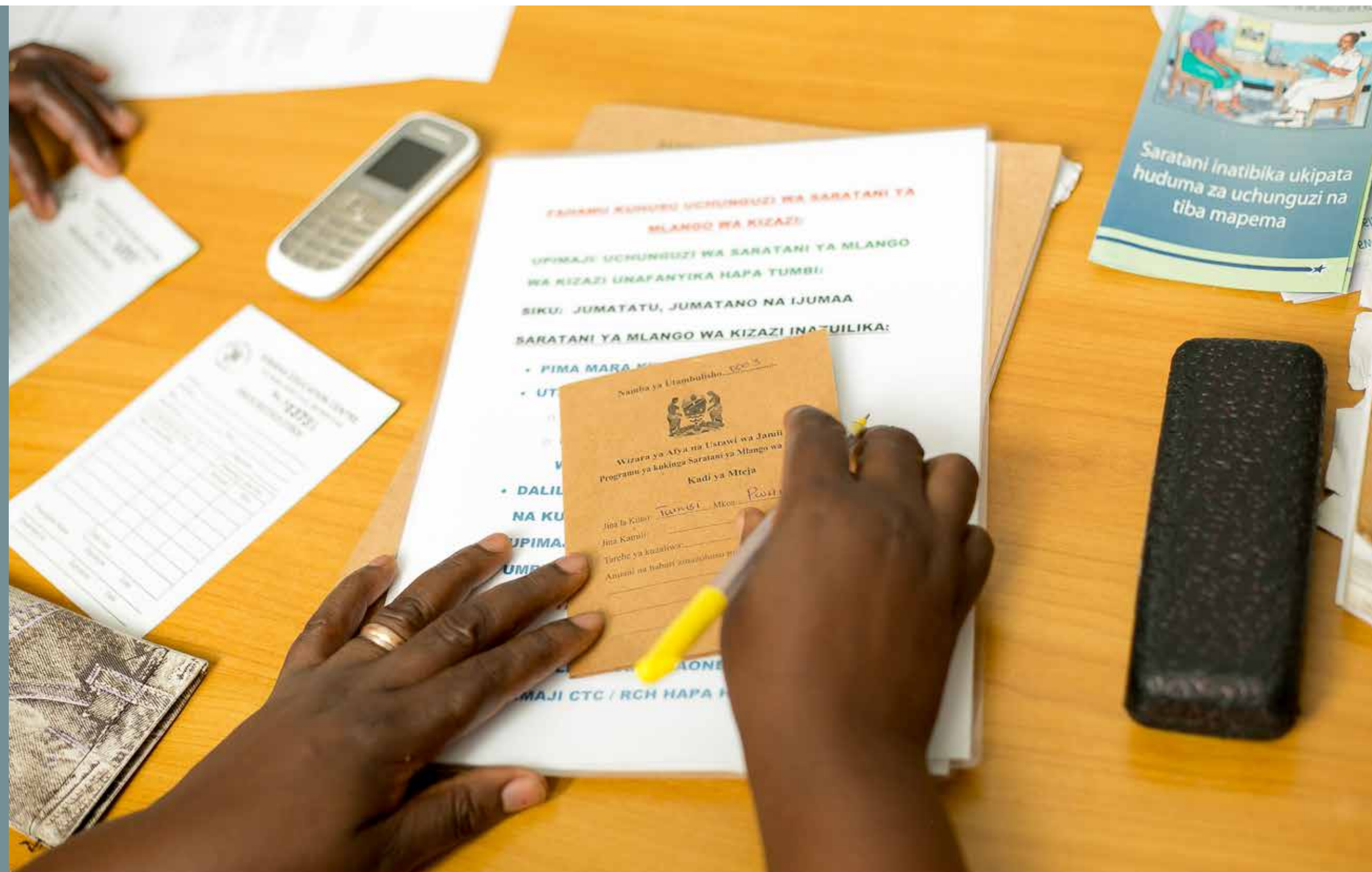
NURSES AND LEADERS IN HEALTHCARE IN EAST AFRICA MIDWIVES

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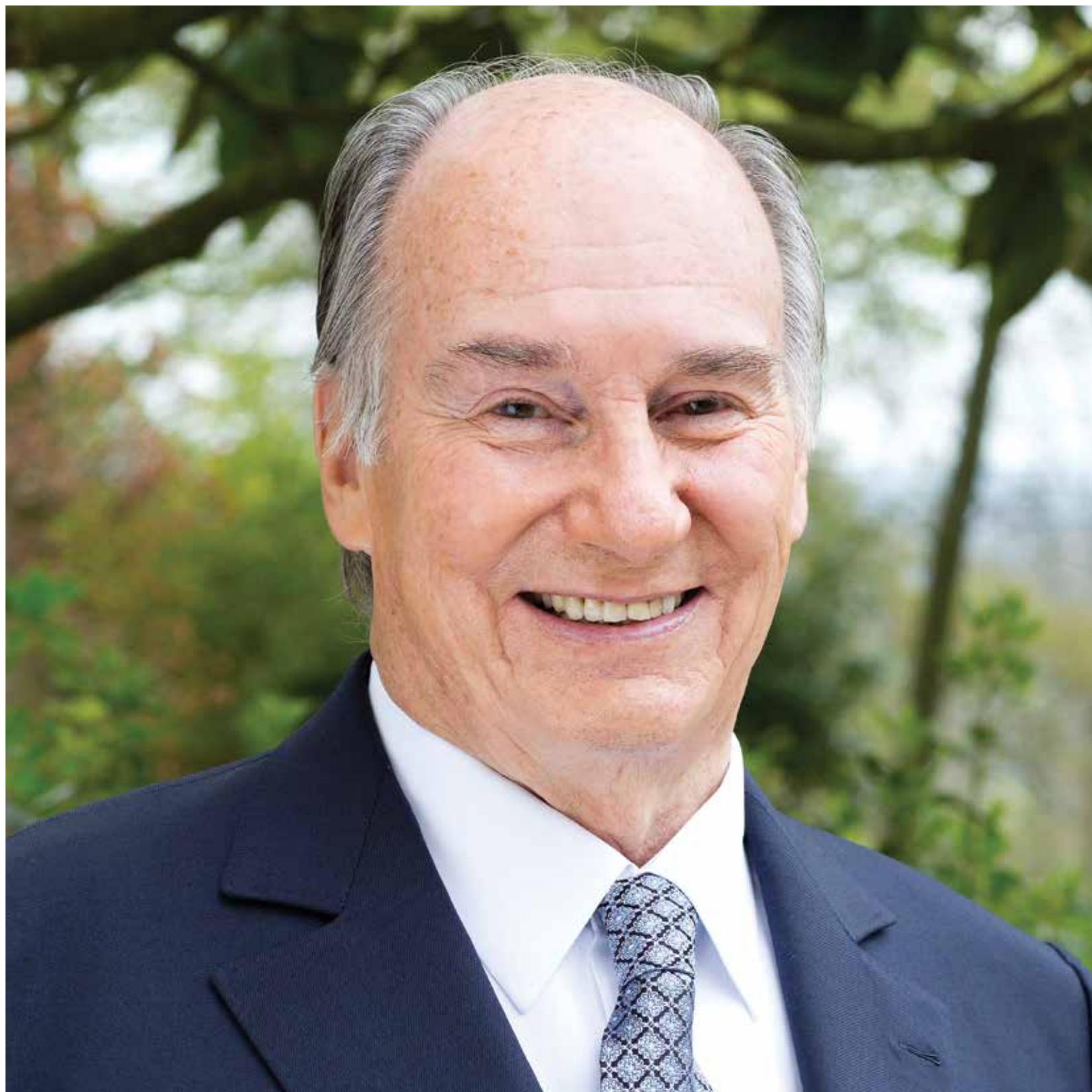
PREFACE

The Aga Khan University (AKU) is a pioneering, not-for-profit, private university that works to improve quality of life in the developing world and beyond. AKU educates leaders who make a difference in the lives of their fellow citizens, addresses widespread problems through its research and delivers international-quality health care. In everything we do, we strive to serve as a role model that raises standards in the societies in which we work. We empower women and the disadvantaged, build support for pluralism and collaborate with government, local partners and world-renowned organizations to achieve shared goals.

Founded in 1983 in Pakistan by His Highness the Aga Khan, AKU launched its first programmes in East Africa in 2000. Today, we have campuses in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and have awarded more than 3,000 diplomas and degrees across the region. Our academic units in East Africa include our Medical College, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Graduate School of Media and Communications, East Africa Institute and Institute for Human Development. The 300-bed Aga Khan University Hospital in Nairobi is East Africa's leading private teaching hospital. The University provides scholarships to nine out of 10 of its students in East Africa.

AKU is one of 10 agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network. Working mainly in Africa and South and Central Asia, AKDN helps those in need to improve their own lives through a long-term, multifaceted approach to development that spans economic, social and cultural dimensions. AKDN's roots in East Africa date back more than a century, and its activities benefit millions of East Africans every year.





QUOTE FROM HIS HIGHNESS

“EDUCATING FOR LEADERSHIP MUST IMPLY SOMETHING MORE THAN THE MERE DEVELOPMENT OF ROTE SKILLS. BEING PROFICIENT AT ROTE SKILLS IS NOT THE SAME THING AS BEING EDUCATED. AND TRAINING THAT DEVELOPS SKILLS, IMPORTANT AS THEY MAY BE, IS A DIFFERENT THING FROM SCHOOLING IN THE ART AND THE SCIENCE OF THINKING.”

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The stories captured here reflect the depth and diversity of the nursing and midwifery profession in East Africa. Finding, capturing and documenting these stories was a collective effort of many individuals and institutions.

At the very beginning were the investments made by the Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust, the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), the Lund Family and Rotary International that brought the nursing and midwifery training programme to life. These partners provided scholarships, support for programme development and faculty investments that were pivotal in enabling the Aga Khan University School of Nursing and Midwifery (AKU-SONAM) to recruit a diverse set of students and build innovative, pragmatic academic programmes.

Our Academic Heads – Eunice Ndirangu from Kenya, Joseph Mwizerwa from Uganda and Columba Mbekenga for Tanzania – and their teams were at the forefront of tracking down alumni, arranging visits and managing interview schedules in addition to the rigour of their academic schedules. The relationships they have maintained with our alumni were instrumental in the success of this project.

Capturing captivating images of these nurses and midwives in their localities was a monumental but rewarding task carried out by the following talented photographers: Rob Beechey, Kevin Gitonga, Jjumba Martin and Christopher Wilton-Steer.

Interviews with the alumni across the length and breadth of East Africa were carried out by Pauline Muindi, Loveluck Mwashu, Trezer Oguda and Mwihaki Muraguri of Paukwa House, which led the story development and compilation of this book. The conceptualisation and development of this publication were led by Sharon Brownie, Dean of SONAM, and Yvonne Mathu, Regional Manager, SONAM.

Most important, we wish to thank the nurses and midwives who took the time to share their incredible stories with us. Their work at the forefront of healthcare is a representation of the lifechanging role of nurses and midwives in East Africa and beyond. We hope that these stories will continue to be a source of inspiration as they lead to a deeper understanding of the critical role these health workers perform each day.





FOREWORD

The World Bank global estimate is that almost one billion people are denied the basic human right of accessible and affordable healthcare, and that a major proportion of this group resides in sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast to this scenario, nurses and midwives make up 50% of the global health workforce with proportions as high as 85% in many African nations. Thus nurses and midwives are the major resource via which the rapid and cost-effective scale-up of universal health coverage can be advanced.

SONAM, a unit of the Aga Khan University, established its nursing and midwifery programmes in East Africa in 2001 with a primary goal of providing high-quality training to working nurses and midwives through curricula steeped in the development of capacity in leadership, critical thinking and service innovation. Our programmes are designed for working nurses, enabling them to continue employment while studying and building their skills to address the aforementioned service gaps and transform the landscape of health.

As our programmes have unfolded, so has our learning. We have continuously adapted our teaching methodology to ensure relevance to the East African health reality. Our students have come from a range of experiences and training programmes, which has helped to sharpen our offering, ensuring that AKU-SONAM provides a distinct added value. Conversely, as our students have transitioned to alumni we have witnessed a depth and breadth of growth amongst them that is testament to their commitment, passion, hard work and expertise in the field

AKU-SONAM alumni have gone on to work as leaders in healthcare across East Africa. They work in the wards of public and private sector hospitals, remaining true to their calling of service at the frontlines of health; others have moved into the ranks of policymakers who are defining the new standards for nursing practice and care in this region; and others have transitioned from student to teacher, imparting their wisdom and learning to a new generation of nurses and midwives.

All in all, our alumni are making an impact – on patients, on families, on communities and on the healthcare system. The selection of stories captured here provides a modest insight into the major impacts and myriad of ways in which AKU-SONAM alumni are contributing to health in East Africa. We are proud of their achievements, and we hope that you will feel as inspired as we do about the contributions of nurses and midwives and the future of health in this region.

Sharon Brownie

**Dean, School of Nursing and Midwifery
The Aga Khan University
East Africa**



TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER

Our academic programmes have been in place for more than 15 years, and over this time we have constantly expanded the profile of our students in terms of geography, skills and practice. The majority continue to serve in clinical settings after graduation while others provide leadership in management, policy and research across government, private, NGO and faith-based sectors. Each demonstrates new ways in which nurses make an impact in the health sector. We strongly believe that this diversity is a result of how our programmes focus on nurturing and building critical thinking and leadership skills, which encourages our students to think beyond the conventional – thus testing, building and using their capabilities in new ways.

We are keenly aware that nurses and midwives make up almost 80% of the frontline workforce in East Africa, and that more than 90% of our alumni have chosen to continue working in this region, improving the quality of lives for thousands, giving further impetus to our work. Ongoing engagement with our alumni allows us to be up to date and current with local and regional challenges in delivering healthcare, which helps ensure our programmes are tailored to these realities. Close contact with our graduates means that our academic community is just one step away from transforming communities as our efforts are rolled out through our alumni.

As we continue to build future cohorts of highly trained and specialised nurses, we increasingly look to our vibrant alumni community to guide the work we do. It is with a real sense of privilege and humility that we have received and share the stories within this book. We know that there are many more of our alumni practicing with excellence, with more of such stories, and what excites us is the opportunity to keep working as a catalyst to educate nurses and midwives for decades to come.

Eunice Ndirangu
**Academic Head,
SONAM EA,
The Aga Khan University,
Nairobi, Kenya**

Joseph Mwizerwa
**Academic Head,
SONAM EA,
The Aga Khan University,
Kampala, Uganda**

Columba Mbekenga
**Academic Head,
SONAM EA,
The Aga Khan University,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania**



ISMAIL RAHIMTULLA
WALJEE TRUST

KENYATTA NATIONAL
HOSPITAL
SCHOOL OF NURSING

**OUR
ALUMNI**



KENYA

With an estimated population of 49.7 million and an annual growth rate of 1.68% per year, Kenya is the second most populous country in East Africa. The country has a median age of 19 years and a robust although declining fertility rate of 3.9 births per woman. According to the latest World Health Organization (WHO) Kenya's life expectancy is 63.4 years.

While Kenya has an active economy and is the largest business hub in the region, it still grapples with a myriad of problems that have compromised the quality of healthcare. Service delivery availability, accessibility and affordability remain a continued challenge. Historically the country's burden of disease has been focused on communicable diseases and maternal child mortality, but recent research shows a growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases, attributed to a shift in lifestyles of many of its citizens.

Kenya currently has a ratio of 8.3 practicing nurses to 10,000 people, significantly below WHO's recommendation of 25 nurses per 10,000. Many nurses often attend to more than 100 patients per day, and in many health centres nurses are the only professional care available to rural populations.



AGNES OJOK

THE DILIGENT MIDWIFE

Unit Manager, Maternity Ward
The Aga Khan Hospital, Kisumu



THE DILIGENT MIDWIFE

Agnes Ojok has been working at the Aga Khan Hospital in Kisumu ever since she graduated with a diploma in nursing from the Kenya Medical Training College in 2009. The young girl who constantly admired how her aunt – a nurse – carried herself has blossomed into an outstanding nurse and midwife herself.

Three years after joining the hospital as a Locum Nurse, the hospital awarded scholarships to Agnes and a few of her colleagues to pursue a BScN at the AKU-SONAM. Agnes was elated: “I felt so honoured. I was really fascinated when we were taken through orientation. Everything sounded very new and exciting. I think I experienced culture shock because of the high standards. It was very different from my previous training college.”

Initially, the lecturers would travel from Nairobi to Kisumu. There was no campus in the lakeside town so the hospital allocated the students a room that served as a classroom for one or two weeks of instruction every month. Later, the system changed and the students were required to travel to the capital city for their lessons. Agnes remembers: “I would travel with my newborn baby and the house-help. We would live in a hotel for up to three weeks. It was tough, but I did not want to squander this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to better myself.”

The hectic schedule notwithstanding, Agnes was determined to take in as much as she could: “I really enjoyed Biostatistics, Biochemistry and Academic Writing. The richness and newness of the content excited me. We would write term papers, which really sharpened my writing and research skills.”

Her diligence paid off. In March 2015, she graduated with an BScN: “I came back to work a changed person. I was so knowledgeable. I can now confidently make nursing diagnoses. I was able to lay down a proper care plan for a patient and follow it through. I even inspired the other nurses to go upgrade as they were always impressed by how I handled my responsibilities and the expertise I displayed.”

Agnes is passionate about midwifery. Nothing inspires her more than bringing new life into the world and hearing that first cry from an infant. However, maternal and child mortality is still a thorn in the flesh in many areas across the country. “As a result of my training, I have excellent skills and hands-on experience in managing postpartum haemorrhage, the number-one cause of maternal mortality in Kenya. I have been able to mentor student nurses as well as new nurses on preventing haemorrhage and managing hypertensive conditions.”

A master’s degree in reproductive health is one of the things Agnes would like to achieve in the near future to sustain her excellence in the nursing industry. “I have a vision of becoming a teacher or a lecturer. I want to see the number of people taking on midwifery increase. We need qualified staff who are equipped with resuscitative skills because mothers are dying out there due to complications during birth.”

For now, Agnes leads a team of nurses and midwives as they work to ensure mothers and babies receive the best care possible.

“I HAVE A VISION OF BECOMING A TEACHER OR A LECTURER. I WANT TO SEE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING ON MIDWIFERY INCREASE. WE NEED QUALIFIED STAFF WHO CAN DEAL WITH COMPLICATIONS DURING BIRTH.”



HASSAN WASONGA KASIM

AGENT OF CHANGE

Nurse In-charge
Magodzoni Dispensary



AGENT OF CHANGE

In April 2012, in the throes of what was perhaps the most difficult period of his life, Hassan Kassim contemplated dropping out of the programme he'd just enrolled into at AKU-SONAM. His wife had just died while delivering a set of preterm triplets at Coast General Hospital. Shortly afterwards, he also lost one of the triplets.

"The babies were born too early...at around seven months. Unfortunately, although it was a natural childbirth, my wife developed complications and died," he remembers as the pain crosses his face.

"It was the first week of my training at the Aga Khan University where I was upgrading my diploma to become a Registered Nurse, and I had to leave and take my wife's body upcountry and attend to burial preparations – all while being there for my other children and the newborns. It was an emotionally, financially and physically draining time. The Aga Khan University's tutors went out of their way to encourage me to come back and continue with my classes. One of them even sent someone to accompany me back to Nairobi from upcountry. Before exams, the tutors would help with individual coaching based on a student's unique needs. That made the experience so much easier for me," he explains.

He's also grateful that a scholarship from the University helped cover half the fees. "Without such help, I wouldn't have been able afford it, especially as I had children in high school."

Looking back, he's glad that he stuck it out and graduated in 2014. He believes that his training at AKU-SONAM was instrumental in securing him his current position as the Nurse In-charge at Magodzoni Dispensary in Kwale County.

"I was promoted from an Assistant Chief Nurse at Waa Dispensary to the Nurse In-charge at Magodzoni Dispensary, soon after my graduation," he says, beaming with pride. Under Hassan's management, the dispensary is clean and well-maintained. The patients, most of them leso-wearing pregnant women and mothers with cooing babies, wait patiently in the open breeze.

In a day, the dispensary attends to approximately 80 patients. A wide range of services are offered including maternity, antenatal and postnatal care, well baby clinics, family planning, cancer screening, malaria testing and treatment, HIV management and TB treatment. In addition to attending to patients, Hassan's roles also include financial management and accounting, record-keeping and reporting, and general leadership of his colleagues.

His management style is firm but friendly. "I bring everyone on board, including the support and technical staff. We work as friends in an open environment towards a common goal of serving our patients better."

From time to time, Hassan mans the dispensary by himself. "There are days I have to do everything myself, which can be quite overwhelming. As it is, we are already understaffed and tend to be overworked. That is one of the challenges I encounter, and I'm petitioning the county government for more staff."

Truly dedicated to his job despite its numerous challenges, Hassan remains an agent of change in this small, rural dispensary.

"WHEN I WAS FIRST POSTED HERE AT MAGODZONI, THE DISPENSARY WAS ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSING FROM POOR MANAGEMENT. BUT WITH THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS I LEARNT AT THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY, I HAVE MANAGED TO TURN THE SITUATION AROUND."



BETH WAWERU

THE DEVOTED CAREGIVER

Clinical Instructor of the Medical Ward
The Aga Khan University Hospital



THE DEVOTED CAREGIVER

When Beth Waweru speaks, you hear the years of experience rolling off her tongue. Her words of wisdom echo those of other great minds. Beth believes her work in the health department was birthed by a calling.

“When I completed high school, I saw the need to become a nurse,” she narrates. “My father had been unwell, and seeing him in his state of discomfort gave me the encouragement to equip myself with skills that would make me a professional caregiver.” Her father’s unstable health resulted in habitual hospital check-ins and admissions. It was an emotional time and an even more challenging period financially.

Beth’s desire to pursue nursing was met with her father’s resistance. In his mind, the only career path his children would take was in the educational sector. “My father was a teacher, so he was very adamant in his wanting me to follow in his footsteps.” But Beth’s desire couldn’t be contained. She sent applications to various nursing colleges hopeful that one day she would walk through hospital wards, listening, attending to and advising patients.

It took three years, but it was worth the wait. Beth was accepted to the Clive Irvine School of Nursing in Chogoria in 1997. She put her best foot forward and thrived through the four-year programme. With that achievement secured, Beth decided to volunteer at New Life Children’s Home where after eight months she found herself in pursuit of something more fulfilling – being in an actual hospital.

Her moment to shine came when a friend reached out and asked Beth to accompany her to the Aga Khan University Hospital to submit an application. Beth jumped at the idea – and when she looks back now, she is glad she agreed to go. “When I arrived I informed the person who was available to chat that I had submitted four applications. She probably saw my readiness, and sent me to the ICU department, which only asked me if I was ready to work.”

Barely a day later, Beth was called and requested to report to the hospital as a nurse. She saw no reason to decline and began her dream career. For the first nine months of her tenure, she worked in between the ICU ward and the renal unit, grasping onto names of machines and getting into the caregiving spirit. In 2006 she was awarded as the Best ICU Nurse and the hospital’s Nurse of The Year. This was a big victory. Big enough to push Beth to acquire more. She had seen two of her fellow nurses studying for their degree at AKU-SONAM, noticed how efficient and confident they had become, and imagined how much better she would be if she pursued her degree.

Beth joined AKU-SONAM in 2007 with support from both the hospital and the University. She was able to study in comfort and graduated four years later.

Today when Beth looks back at her time at AKU-SONAM, she laughs at her personal milestones. “We learnt with textbooks, but we were also encouraged to critically think about various situations. To add our own understanding beyond what the textbooks said. Immediately after I graduated from AKU, I applied for and was promoted to the role of Clinical Instructor of the Medical Ward.”

Through the AKU-SONAM degree programme, Beth Waweru has gained the confidence she desired. She has continued to live her dream of being a caregiver and is actually diving into the world of academics, hoping to keep her father’s wish alive while still working in the health sector.

“I STARTED AS A JUNIOR NURSE, VERY NAIVE. WHEN I LOOK BACK AT HOW FAR I’VE COME, THERE ARE MANY THINGS I AM THANKFUL FOR.”



STACY KENDI

CANCER WARRIOR

Nursing Officer
Machakos Level 5 Hospital



CANCER WARRIOR

According to the Kenya Medical Research Institute, there are 40,000 new cases of cancer and 28,000 deaths from cancer recorded every year in Kenya. These statistics make cancer the third-highest cause of death in Kenya after infectious and cardiovascular diseases. One of the main problems facing the fight against cancer is an acute shortage of cancer specialists in the country – there are fewer than 40 cancer specialists across Kenya.

This is a statistic that Stacy Kendi, a Nursing Officer at Machakos Level 5 Hospital, hopes to change. “I graduated with a Diploma in Oncology Nursing from the Aga Khan University in February 2018, and I’m in the process of setting up the first Cancer Care Unit at Machakos Level 5 Hospital. Currently, the hospital has only a palliative care centre. The residents of Machakos County have to travel all the way to Nairobi for cancer care, where most of them are added to long waiting lists to see a specialist or get crucial treatments like chemotherapy and radiotherapy.”

“We offer palliative, care but there’s need to expand to more comprehensive cancer care,” Stacy explains. “Two of us were sponsored by the hospital to study for a Diploma in Oncology Nursing, and we’ve just graduated. We also have a pharmacist who has specialised in cancer drugs, and a few other health professionals who have gone through minor courses in cancer care. We’re building a multidisciplinary team for the Cancer Care Unit. We’ve gotten a go-ahead from the management, so we’re in the final stages of setting up the unit.”

Once set up, the Cancer Care Unit will focus on educating patients on prevention and early diagnosis of cancer. “All we need is room to start our operations. Fortunately, the First Lady of Machakos County is very supportive of the initiative and has already opened a cancer registry for the county. She was also the one who organised for our sponsorship for the Oncology Nursing training.”

Even before the opportunity for sponsorship came along, Stacy was considering pursuing oncology training. A cancer scare in 2011 forced her to think critically of the state of oncology care in the country, especially in public health facilities. “I had a small lump in my breast that turned out to be non-cancerous. Because of that experience, I found myself thinking more about cancer. What would have happened if I had cancer? What about the women who don’t know about self-examinations? What about those who don’t have access to proper testing and cancer treatment? Now I’m glad that I can do something to help.”

Stacy is so passionate about her specialty that she organises community outreach training on cancer prevention and care. “Through the Anglican Church in Machakos, of which I’m a member, I have taught the community on cancer care and prevention. I have done breast examinations and taught women how to do self-examinations as well as how to identify early symptoms of cervical cancer.”

As she waits for the cancer care unit to be set up, 33-year-old Stacy continues to attend to patients in the newborn and the palliative care units. She’s worked at the newborn unit – which admits 30 to 50 newborns a day – for two years. Before that she was a Paediatric Nurse for a year, and a Theatre Nurse for a year and a half.

She dreams of pursuing a master’s degree in Oncology and having an even bigger impact in caring for cancer patients not only in Machakos County, but also in the country. No doubt the differences that Stacy will continue to make will often mean a life saved through early diagnosis.

“BEING A NURSE GIVES ME SATISFACTION. GOING HOME KNOWING THAT I MADE A DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE’S LIFE IS THE MOST REWARDING THING IN THE WORLD.”



ZABLON LIPULE

**PROMOTING WORLD-CLASS
HEALTH SERVICES**

Clinical Practice Educator
The Aga Khan University Hospital



PROMOTING WORLD-CLASS HEALTH SERVICES

When it comes to normal days at a hospital, nurses meet and attend to innumerable patients. While some may be easy to interact with and compliant with instructions, others are quite the opposite. The latter are the kind of patients Zablon Lipule deals with on a daily basis. Although it may seem like a tedious task, he takes on his role as Clinical Practice Educator with pride.

From the onset of his high school days, after losing his father to a road accident, Zablon knew that the only way to play a role in preventing such an occurrence was to be actively involved in the health sector. “After my father’s passing, I wasn’t sure about being a nurse, but I did know that the health sector was where I wanted to be. Also, my few visits to the hospital gave me a sense of what working in health looked like. The doctors and nurses were all so poised and helpful to me.”

After completing his foundation in nursing at Kenya Medical Training College in Eldoret, Zablon set his eyes on Nairobi’s top hospitals. He spent a day walking around the town, making inquiries, additionally dropping off handwritten applications, hoping luck would stand by his side. When he got to the Aga Khan University Hospital, he realised that he had arrived at the perfect time. The following week he was interviewed and began working as a temporal, and after six months he was confirmed as an Official Nurse at the hospital. Four years into the job, it was time to advance his education, hoping that expanded knowledge would give him the morale to venture into a higher position.

Zablon joined AKU-SONAM in 2007 to pursue a BScN. He had learnt about the programme from a few of his supervisors at work who were taking it. Zablon had noticed that his colleagues had become more proficient in their daily tasks and saw the programme as a chance for him to grow.

While he is currently pursuing his master’s degree in health management, Zablon appreciates the role AKU-SONAM played in his professional career. He gained relevant critical thinking skills and a confidence boost that has allowed him to sufficiently train nurses on current trends. Zablon continues to scale the health sector he always knew he wanted to be involved in.

“WHEN I SAW HOW MUCH BETTER THEY HAD BECOME I TOLD MYSELF THAT I NEEDED TO ENROL FOR THE DEGREE PROGRAMME. I STARTED IN 2007 AND GRADUATED IN 2010.”



PEACE AMBETSA CHITECHY

CHAMPIONING MATERNITY CARE

Assistant Nurse In-charge
Matuga Dispensary



CHAMPIONING MATERNITY CARE

Located an hour-and-a-half's drive away from the historic Mombasa Island is Kwale, one of the poorest counties in Kenya. Working in isolated rural dispensaries, nurses and other healthcare workers here attend to more than 80 patients a day. In such places, nurses aren't "just" nurses; they also act as doctors and clinical officers. Peace Ambetsa Chitechy is one such health worker. The talkative and cheerful 31-year-old is the Assistant Nurse In-Charge in Matuga Dispensary.

Kwale's local population has always heavily relied on traditional birth attendants and midwives for maternal care. This might partly explain why a 2016 United Nations Population Fund report listed Kwale as one of the counties with the highest number of maternal deaths. Peace is at the forefront of reducing the number of preventable maternal deaths in Matuga sub-county through quality healthcare.

"My roles include attending to pregnant mothers for antenatal care and deliveries. I also immunise babies, treat patients with minor ailments and advise patients on family planning. There are only two nurses in the dispensary; the Nursing Officer In-charge and me, so we work in turns. In a day, we attend to approximately 90 to 120 patients."

Despite the overwhelming workload, Peace has an air of confidence and competence as she handles her duties. She credits the AKU-SONAM Enrolled Nurse to Registered Nurse programme for equipping her with the skills necessary for her job.

"I joined the Aga Khan University in 2012 and graduated in 2014. Before my graduation, I was a nurse at Kikoneni Dispensary, which is also in Kwale County. I got my nursing certificate from Maseno School of Nursing in 2005. After that I worked as a nurse at Pandya Memorial Hospital in Mombasa, Msambweni District Hospital, Kikoneni Dispensary and later Shimoni before I was posted here as an Assistant In-charge. Without upgrading my training, I probably wouldn't have gotten the promotion when I did."

While previously she viewed nursing as just a supportive role to doctors, she now knows that a nurse also has to be intimately and actively involved in a patient's treatment. "I have to ask myself why a patient is receiving this kind of treatment and not a different one. Sometimes I even go back to my books for on-the-job research. Even when I've referred a patient to another hospital, I call and find out how they're doing. I am also able to identify twin pregnancies and attend to the mother accordingly and handle mothers with haemorrhage after delivery, which is one of the leading causes of maternal deaths," she says.

With help from community health workers, Peace and her colleagues have managed to steadily improve the number of pregnant mothers attending the dispensary for antenatal care and deliveries. "The mothers were apprehensive about coming for antenatal care because of things like immunisation and

the cost. Now most of them are aware that maternal care is provided free of charge and that immunisation is for their own good. We also have more mothers coming for deliveries and we are surpassing our target of 18 deliveries per month."

In the future, Peace wants to pursue a degree in psychology, where she feels she can help fight the mental health epidemic engulfing the country, but in the meantime she continues to champion good health for mothers and babies in a place where she is desperately needed.

"MY DREAM IS TO MAKE MATUGA DISPENSARY'S COMPREHENSIVE CARE CLINIC PATIENT-FRIENDLY. I WANT TO ENCOURAGE MORE WOMEN AND THEIR PARTNERS TO COME HERE FOR THEIR MATERNAL/REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NEEDS."



FLORENCE THAINE

THE TENACIOUS STUDENT

Clinical Practice Educator
The Aga Khan University Hospital



THE TENACIOUS STUDENT

From the time she first visited her older sister, who was a nun and a nurse, where she worked Florence Thaine knew she wanted to be a nurse. She may have been less than 10 years old, but the way she saw the nurses ease suffering and care for the disabled at Tuuru Home for the Disabled left an indelible imprint on the young child. Her path was not easy, though. Her father had other dreams for her and hoped she would become a teacher, but the cards had been cast for her dream. Florence did her first training at Consolata Nursing School and was lucky to find her first job in Nairobi, the capital, just a few weeks after graduation.

In 2006, she joined the Aga Khan University Hospital as a Locum Nurse, providing much-needed relief and support in the maternity ward of the busy hospital. Within a year she had been made a permanent member of staff. "I really enjoy being at the Aga Khan University Hospital. We are able to provide services to patients because we have all the necessary equipment, which makes such a difference." Florence soon heard about the BScN programme from her colleagues and was intrigued by the opportunity to further her studies. She had to wait almost five years before her chance came to enrol in the programme. "Our institutional policy really helped me, because after three years of service I was eligible for support and the hospital paid half of my tuition costs." She joined the BScN programme in 2011, juggling school and work on a daily basis.

Florence found herself soaking up the lessons in her course and being challenged by the idea of approaching each problem from a questioning standpoint. It was a far cry from the practices she had encountered in her career, which suggested nurses were to act and not question. She continually tested out her new ideas once back in the ward, much to the chagrin of older nurses and doctors. It was a new approach and one she took on wholeheartedly. Sometimes it would mean finding the inner strength to challenge a doctor's prescription, or stepping in with new practices for more senior nurses. Florence considered her education a tool to be used, and use it she did.

Florence now serves as a Clinical Practice Educator, a post she stepped into in an acting capacity and then made her own. She continues to use her skills each day on the floor of the hospital, working with other nurses as she imparts her own wisdom along with the new practices she seeks to help them embrace. The young girl who always wanted to help others indeed came full circle.

"AFTER GRADUATION I WAS APPOINTED AS A SHIFT LEADER, HAVING TO MAKE SURE THE OTHER NURSES ON DUTY DO THE RIGHT THING, AND THE PATIENTS GET THE RIGHT CARE. I WOULD CHIP IN SO MUCH THEY NOTICED AND WOULD TELL ME HOW DIFFERENT I WAS AFTER MY DEGREE."



GEORGE AGOT

**SERVING FROM THE
FRONTLINE**

Chief Nursing Officer
Pumwani Maternity Hospital



SERVING FROM THE FRONTLINE

Surprisingly, George Agot left a well-paying bank job to pursue nursing. It was a decision that shocked everyone around him. Jobs were hard to come by, yet he was quitting a decent position to chase an uncertain future.

“I left because I wanted to improve myself. Besides, I had always been drawn to medicine.”

He went on to enrol at the Kenya Medical Training College, graduating with a diploma in nursing. He was in luck – he immediately got a job at the National Spinal Injury Hospital in Nairobi. Training in nursing was rigorous, but it had not quite prepared him for the work at the hospital: “Dealing with bedridden patients was challenging, more so for a new Nursing Officer. I learnt to take it in stride.”

George’s strength was again put to the test when a few years later he was posted to the Industrial Area Remand Prison in Nairobi, following a cholera outbreak in the prisons. Many of his colleagues who had also received transfer letters refused to go. Some even resigned, but George took up the challenge. Under the mentorship of the then Provincial Nursing Officer, he and his colleagues worked to contain the outbreak until the return to normalcy. The tenacity to take on a difficult job resulted in George’s promotion to Nursing Officer In-charge of Prison Health Services at only age 25. After overseeing the establishment of a fully fledged hospital and development of health services at the institution for seven years, George was ready to take on a new challenge. His new posting was Nairobi’s largest maternity centre – Pumwani Maternity Hospital.

While at Pumwani, he decided to further his education. He first enrolled for an advanced diploma in nursing at Kenyatta University. Then in 2007, George joined AKU-SONAM for an opportunity to pursue a BScN. “I feel honoured to have trained at AKU. The public institutions I had attended were not, in any way, comparable with AKU. The facilities were well-equipped and the training was amazing! AKU also showed me what I had been missing out on during my long career of more than 10 years – computers. My introduction to computer studies completely changed my worldview.”

While at AKU-SONAM, George was posted to the School of Nursing at Pumwani as a lecturer. It was an opportunity for him to both receive and give back at the same time! The modules at AKU-SONAM, including problem solving at the workplace, became quite practical when he was again promoted.

George has had to debunk many misconceptions about nursing throughout his career. He is currently the Chief Nursing Officer at Pumwani Maternity Hospital, the first male to take charge of the facility. While pursuing his master’s degree in health economics, some people wondered why a “mere nurse” would pursue such an advanced course.

George has gone on to enrol at the University of Nairobi for his PhD in epidemiology, economics and nursing, breaking new ground with his dissertation study in the area of structural defects in Kenya. His solid foundation allowed him to navigate his master’s and now PhD in a public institution with finesse, and for this he is grateful. He joins alumni spread across East Africa calling for the introduction of master’s and PhD programmes to ensure continuity of excellence cultivated from the certificate courses the University offers.

“TO BE A NURSE, PARTICULARLY A MALE NURSE, IS NOT EASY; BUT RUNNING AWAY HAS NEVER BEEN AN OPTION. I WILL FINISH WHAT I STARTED AND LEAVE A LEGACY.”



CAROLINE NDICHU

PORTRAIT OF RESILIENCE

Nursing Officer In-charge of Maternity,
Antenatal and Labour Ward
Kiambu District Hospital



PORTRAIT OF RESILIENCE

When Caroline Ndichu's parents learned that she wanted to become a nurse, they balked at the idea. At the time, there was a strange but common misconception that night shifts were a guise for nurses to engage in prostitution, so Caroline understood their misgivings. When Caroline secured a place to study nursing at the University of Nairobi, her parents refused to pay the school fees. Undeterred, she decided to raise her fees by getting into business. When she finally earned enough money to take her through her first two years of school, she enrolled at Kaplong School of Nursing. Caroline's parents later chipped in for the remainder of her course.

Caroline is currently the Nursing Officer In-charge of the Maternity, Antenatal and Labour Ward at Kiambu District Hospital. From an early age, Caroline has always wanted to help people, and she was fascinated by the passion the nurses she knew exuded when doing their work.

Today, Caroline is glad she stuck to her guns and became a nurse, working at the Githunguri Health Centre. While there, she decided to join AKU-SONAM to pursue a BScN, becoming the first nurse in Githunguri sub-county to enrol for a degree. "When I got into the Aga Khan University, I felt as though I was in a foreign land; it was a totally new culture. Things were completely different, from the administration to the social life."

Besides being thoroughly impressed by the demeanour of the lecturers and students, she also enjoyed her coursework, particularly surgical nursing and psychiatry. She recalls a time when she and her team received a man who had gone into a temporary coma in a case of diabetic ketoacidosis. They were able to manage the patient until he got to a referral hospital.

Sponsorships played a great role in aiding Caroline: "Before I joined the University, I would hustle to make ends meet. The money from organizations that aided me was such a relief! I was able to use the time I initially spent looking for extra money to focus on my education and spend time with my family."

Caroline, in seeking approval to study while working, inspired the Nursing Service Manager for the county to also go back to school. They both graduated in 2016. Caroline was immediately promoted to Head Nurse at the centre.

"The new post came with pressure to implement change. The leadership and management skills I gained at AKU were crucial. I introduced Continuous Professional Development at work, encouraging nurses to go back to school. Most nurses became IT-proficient, and by the time operations began online the nurses were computer-literate. By December 2017, child deliveries had risen from 20 to 150 a month."

This is just one of the several achievements that informed her decision to transfer to Kiambu District Hospital. Caroline believes that the training she received at AKU-SONAM continuously comes in handy as she holds the reins. Emergency preparedness, proper record-keeping and attitude change are some of the things on her to-do list while she strives to improve the services at her resident hospital.

Caroline hopes to further her education and is keen to return to AKU-SONAM when a master's programme is offered.

"I CREDIT WHERE I AM TODAY TO EDUCATION I RECEIVED FROM AKU. THE QUALITY OF TEACHING THAT IS GIVEN TO STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS IMPACTS THE ATTITUDE THEY HAVE WHEN THEY BEGIN WORKING AS NURSES. IF YOU MAKE THEM SUFFER, THEY WILL COME TO MAKE PATIENTS SUFFER. I FELT I SHOULD BE PART OF CHANGING THIS SO THAT PATIENTS CAN BEGIN TO TRUST NURSES WITH THEIR LIVES AGAIN."



MARY WAMBUI MWANIKI

THE DYNAMIC NURSE

Public Health Nurse
Kangema Sub-District Hospital



THE DYNAMIC NURSE

In September 2016, Mary Wambui Mwaniki stood in front of a 300-strong audience of esteemed health professionals and guests – including his Highness the Aga Khan – in London and delivered a keynote presentation. “There was a standing ovation when I was done, and later His Highness the Aga Khan personally thanked me. When everyone stood and clapped at the end of my presentation, I couldn’t believe it. It was out of this world! The entire experience was surreal for me,” says the Public Health Nurse from Kangema Sub-County in Murang’a.

“I was at the conference to represent the Aga Khan University alumni, sharing a presentation on the impact of Johnson & Johnson’s scholarship. My presentation was to be a key deciding factor on whether the company would continue providing financial scholarship for students in the University. I must have convinced them because they decided to continue with the programme, and it’s still ongoing to date.”

During her time at AKU-SONAM, Mary was one of the beneficiaries of the instrumental scholarship, which she earned by being the top student in her class. “The scholarship covered three quarters of the school fees,” she elaborates. “This really helped because at the time, my salary from the Ministry of Health wouldn’t have been able to cover the training. I’ll forever be grateful to the Aga Khan University and Johnson & Johnson for making it all possible for me.”

35-year-old Mary is a dynamo – energetic and determined. Coupled with her skills, it is these qualities that have propelled her to the position

of Kangema Sub-County Public Health Nurse. She is responsible for overseeing 30 health facilities; 19 of them are government-owned, 3 are faith-based and 10 are private.

Her responsibilities include linking the sub-county to the greater Murang’a County in terms of the delivery of health services, making sure that facilities are sufficiently stocked with needed pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical goods, deploying health staff in the public facilities, inspecting the facilities to ensure they maintain standards of service delivery and advising on changes and capacity-building of nurses in the sub-county.

Additionally, she also mentors several nurses in the sub-county: “As a supervisor, my role is to provide support, motivate and mentor the nurses in the health facilities I oversee. Being in a superior position doesn’t mean harassing your subordinates. My approach is to show them that I’m not a boss but a colleague at a different level and we’re working towards the same goals. I have found that it’s more effective to discuss the challenges they have and find solutions together. That way, they love their jobs and are motivated to perform at their best.”

Mary has held this position since 2015, after having been a nurse with the immunisation programme for Murang’a County. Her training at AKU-SONAM earned her her current position. “I was appointed to this position just before I graduated,” she says.

While studying for her BScN, Mary gained plenty of skills that help her in her job. “I had my eye on the BScN programme because I knew the training there was top-notch. The training

equipped me with indispensable knowledge and skills. With the community diagnosis and problem-solving skills I gained, I managed to raise the rate of immunisation in my sub-county to 82% from 75%,” she explains.

This is just one of her many achievements. Mary continues to be a role model to all those around her, an ideal she plans to keep living by as she challenges herself to reach even greater heights.

“I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED AS SOMEONE WHO HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT, ESPECIALLY BY THE NURSES I’VE SUPERVISED. I WANT THEM TO SAY ‘I’M WHO I AM TODAY BECAUSE MARY TOOK TIME TO MENTOR ME’.”



LYDIA NYACHIRO

HEART AND SCIENCE FOR HEALTH

Nursing Officer In-charge of
Medical Surgical Units
The Aga Khan Hospital, Kisumu



HEART AND SCIENCE FOR HEALTH

Lydia Nyachiro's definition of nursing propels her approach towards her chosen career: "It is a caring profession where you use your heart and science to help those who are unable to help themselves."

Lydia has come a long way in her 20-year tenure as a nurse. She spent her introductory days at Gendia Mission Hospital where she attained her Certificate in Nursing, then worked as a Community Health Nurse there for two years, before moving and settling at the Aga Khan Hospital as a Nursing Officer In-charge of Medical Surgical Units.

Lydia believes her growth in her nursing career is a result of her time with AKU, both the hospital and the University. They have been very instrumental in pushing her to pursue excellence, thus improving service delivery at her workplace. She was always on the lookout for opportunities to improve herself, so in 2004 she enrolled for a diploma in nursing course at AKU-SONAM.

The distance learning approach was quite new to Lydia. "The tutors used to come from Aga Khan Nairobi to Kisumu once a month. We had a room here in the hospital that we converted into a classroom. The hospital was and still is very supportive, giving us time to go to class and then come to work. We would do assignments and submit them online."

Her childhood dreams had come true: she had a diploma in nursing, but Lydia did not feel she had reached her peak. In 2012, under full scholarship from the Aga Khan Hospital, Lydia went back to school for a BScN. The upgrade was important. "Nursing is dynamic. We live in a changing world. Different challenges at work fuelled the urge to improve my knowledge and skills."

It was off to AKU-SONAM again, but this time, Lydia and her colleagues had to travel to Nairobi for lessons. The commute to and from Nairobi and having to work was exhausting, but it was all worth it. Lydia was amazed by the course approach, the materials and the relevance it had to her work. She is pleased with the role her training has played in making her the nurse she is today.

"IT WAS VERY EASY FOR ME TO GET BACK TO SCHOOL AND STUDY BECAUSE WHAT I WAS DOING WAS PRACTICALLY WHAT WE WERE TAUGHT IN CLASS. I WOULD APPLY THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE GAINED AT SCHOOL EACH DAY IN MY WORK. I ENJOYED MY WORK AS A NURSE EVEN MORE."



**KENYATTA NATIONAL
HOSPITAL
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

ELIJAH MWANGI

THE NURSE TEACHER

Assistant Chief Nurse & Course
Manager, Critical Care Training
Kenyatta National Hospital



THE NURSE TEACHER

Standing over six feet tall, Elijah Mwangi's skills and education have earned him the post of an Assistant Chief Nurse at the Kenyatta National Hospital. He also doubles as a Course Manager for Critical Care Training at the hospital's School of Nursing. He coordinates the coursework while also teaching Critical Care, Nursing, Emergencies and Research. As a young boy Elijah had three career aspirations: priest, scientist and statistician. Later on, a series of events caused him to reconsider his options – his cousin's death scarred him but also inspired him to pursue nursing: "We were watching TV together, and she just collapsed. I had to carry her on my back to the health centre, which was quite a distance away. She died on the way. That changed everything for me."

On completing high school, Elijah joined Kenya Medical Training College in Nyeri for a Diploma in Nursing and then Kenyatta National Hospital for a Higher Diploma in Critical Care. In 2009, 20 years after he landed his first job, Elijah decided to enrol at AKU-SONAM for a BScN.

"I was especially impressed by the Research and Biostatistics units. Community Health, Research Methodology and the Pathophysiology coursework was also really interesting. That I could go to school for two days in a week and still be able to work was great. The curriculum was covered at the right pace." The coursework at AKU-SONAM equipped Elijah with skills in management of nursing units – skills that came in handy as he rose through the ranks at work.

"The training really caused a shift in my life. Working with patients in critical condition at the ICU and seeing them recover fully was quite inspiring. It was also a refresher on a couple of things we sometimes overlook after having worked for a long time."

The Aga Khan University often partners with different organizations to ease students' financial burdens and help ensure uninterrupted class attendance.

"I got a scholarship from Johnson & Johnson through AKU. That was unforgettable."

On the intensity of his coursework, Elijah shares, "In preparation for the four-month elective programs, we were taken through generating evidence and implementation of solutions. AKU's strict policy on deadlines and proper research papers nurtured the skills I needed to later complete my master's degree in medical statistics at the University of Nairobi in record time."

Elijah is one of several AKU-SONAM alumni staff at the Kenyatta National Hospital School of Nursing. He is adamant that they work well together because of the proper foundation they received at AKU-SONAM, which maintains a vibrant relationship with its alumni, "I have had the opportunity to supervise and mentor university students. I am currently in the final year of my PhD. As an alumnus, I have been granted full access to the library. I can't begin to say how much that has bolstered my research."

While Elijah would have wished to do his master's and PhD at AKU-SONAM, he hopes that it is only a matter of time before the University expands its course offering, "Very few institutions are training on specialties, that is, Critical Care, Nephrology, Oncology and others. Specialized training gives the nurse extra confidence to handle the special ailments and contain situations during emergencies. I believe AKU can teach these courses to international standards."

Elijah is hopeful about the future of nursing in the country: "My dream is to see all the counties in Kenya well-equipped with both machinery and qualified personnel to whom the patient's health is a priority."

For this teacher and nurse, the continued investment in his profession will change the future of thousands of patients.

"EQUIPMENT AND UNITS ARE USELESS WITHOUT PROPER MANPOWER. I WANT TO SEE MY STUDENTS AND MENTEES ACROSS THE COUNTRY SERVING THE PEOPLE OF KENYA TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITIES."



EUNICE MAKENA

ICU CHAMPION

ICU Nurse
The Aga Khan Hospital, Mombasa



ICU CHAMPION

Eunice Makena's mother was a nurse in Maua, her hometown in the central highlands of Kenya. As she grew up, Eunice deeply admired her mother's dedication to her work. "Sometimes patients would even come to see her at home. I was impressed by how she helped them with their problems. She became my role model. She must have really impacted us because my younger brother went on to become a gynaecologist," she says with a laugh.

As an ICU nurse at the Aga Khan Hospital in Mombasa, Eunice is now living her dream and making her mother proud. She shares tales of happy patients who send her thank-you messages on WhatsApp, and one who even paid for her shopping in the supermarket.

"I was shopping in the supermarket when someone started putting stuff in my trolley. I was surprised and slightly annoyed... that is until he introduced himself. Turns out he was the father to one of my former patients – a six-month-old baby who was in acute renal failure. He told me that the girl is now 10 years old, in school, and doing well. That made my day. It is one of the success stories I'll never forget."

Another patient recently called from the US to thank her for caring for his wife. "They were here on vacation and were involved in an accident. The wife had a severe head injury and unfortunately, she passed away. It touched me that even though we lost the patient, the family knew that we had done our best for her," she narrates.

Eunice has been an ICU Nurse at the Aga Khan Hospital for about eight years. "Before that I worked as a nurse in the paediatric ward for nine years. I then requested to be placed in the ICU to widen my scope of experience," she says.

At the time, Eunice was an Enrolled Nurse, and she felt the need to upgrade to Registered Nurse. "That was in 2006. After I graduated in 2009, I came back and was promoted to a Night Manager position. I held that position for three years before coming back to the ICU," she says.

Despite having worked in the ICU for so long, Eunice says that the job is still fresh and challenging every day. "Every day is a learning experience for me. Working here even helped me perform well in my AKU exams. The training helped me become even more competent as a nurse. One of the things I learnt was getting families and patients to take a more active role in their own care. This speeds up recovery for the patients and makes work easier for the nurse."

Eunice's work has not gone unnoticed. She has received several awards from the hospital for her service – including one for Nurse of the Year. As she navigates the tough world of the ICU, her cheerful smile and caring attitude are part of the support she extends to her patients and their anxious families each day.

"NURSING IS NOT JUST A CAREER, IT IS A CALLING. THIS ISN'T THE KIND OF WORK YOU DO FOR MONEY."



MARGARET KANZU KITI

BUILDING A LEGACY

Team Leader, Outpatient Care
Pandya Memorial Hospital



BUILDING A LEGACY

At 58, Margaret Kiti's eyes still light up when she talks about her dream of starting a clinic. Actually, it's no longer a dream but a reality in the making. She has a four-roomed building already set up and is currently working on a connection to water for the clinic. For the project, she partnered with her 23-year-old daughter, Zawadi, a Public Health student in the United States. They have named the clinic Zawadi Healthcare Services.

"My daughter motivated and encouraged me to start the clinic, which is in Bamburi. She was doing a project on Community Diagnosis and saw the need for a clinic. We worked out an arrangement with our church, Christian Pentecostal Ministries International, to have it on their compound and in turn pay them a portion from the income. Were it not for my two young sons still in high school, I would have already resigned and taken up at the clinic full-time. I'm hopeful that I'll soon be able to fully devote myself to the project."

Once up and running, Zawadi Healthcare Services will offer maternal and child health clinics and other outpatient services. "We have a big reception room, a room for the Maternal and Child Health (MCH), a delivery and postnatal room, as well as an examination and observation room," Margaret says. "We will see pregnant mothers, do immunisations and attend to other regular patients. Zawadi clinic is the only healthcare facility available in the locality and poses a challenge to the locals, who have to walk long distances or take motorbike rides to reach the nearest facilities. This is especially difficult at night, so we plan to provide night services."

In the meantime, Margaret finds fulfilment in her role as the Team Leader for Outpatient Care at Pandya Memorial Hospital in Mombasa. "I have held this position for three years. My team of nurses and I are the first point of contact for patients at the hospital. This means we're responsible for deciding which department to refer a patient to, taking patients' vital signs and giving initial treatment."

She is also in charge of Continuous Medical Education, through which she coordinates the training of fellow nurses once a week. With her decades of experience, she also mentors young nurses.

"I started my nursing career in 1983 at St. Luke's Hospital in Kaloleni, Kilifi County. In 1985, I joined the Aga Khan Hospital where I worked as an ICU Nurse until 2001. Afterwards I served as a medical and surgical nurse where I was the team leader. In 2005, I was placed in charge of a renal unit before it was eventually closed in 2011."

Committed to growing her professional development, Margaret enrolled for a BScN degree at AKU-SONAM in 2012, and graduated two years later. "Getting a degree had been on my list of goals to achieve for some time. I got a scholarship courtesy of Johnson & Johnson. For that, I cannot be grateful enough. With the training, I'm empowered in decision-making, management and research. Those skills help me with my job here and will come in handy when I'm running my own clinic."

"I'M PROUD OF THE CLINIC MY DAUGHTER, ZAWADI, AND I ARE SETTING UP. IT'S A CULMINATION OF MY CAREER AS A NURSE AND THROUGH IT I CAN CONTINUE TO SERVE MY COMMUNITY, WHICH HAS POOR ACCESS TO HEALTH FACILITIES."



DAVID ODADA

THE NURSE'S REPRESENTATIVE

Clinical Nurse
**The Aga Khan University Hospital,
Nairobi**



THE NURSE'S REPRESENTATIVE

David Odada's journey into nursing was somewhat serendipitous. When he graduated from high school he had two family members advising him – his uncle who wanted him to pursue IT and his mother, a nurse, who was advocating for nursing. Timing eventually won out as he applied for both courses and the nursing diploma course began before the IT one. He joined Kakamega Medical Training College in 2004 and his path began to unfold before him.

When he graduated in 2006 he decided to pursue work in Nairobi. His first thought was to try to find a locum position at Kenyatta National Hospital, but again a well-meaning family member encouraged him to think about seeking opportunities beyond the public sector. As luck would have it, a month after attaining his diploma he had secured a contract position at the Aga Khan University Hospital. His diligence led him to full-time employment just three months later.

Transitioning from public school training into private sector employment had its pitfalls, though. Much of the training he had received was theoretical, and he had never seen many of the instruments that he was supposed to use on a daily basis. "I had to learn how to use basic machines like a blood pressure machine, and an electronic blood pressure machine on the job. I knew them theoretically, but I had never physically seen them before. Thankfully I had a patient mentor who helped me learn." It was a lesson in kindness that has served David throughout his journey as a Clinical Nurse.

When he joined the Advanced Nursing Studies programme that AKU-SONAM began offering in 2009, it was quietly. He applied through the open call process, and only when he started classes did his colleagues find out that he was pursuing an educational dream. After five semesters he graduated once again – this time with a BScN. Along the way he had learnt new things, including administration in nursing.

As a direct result of his programme, David became a member of the Nursing Association of Kenya and within a short time became the representative of the Aga Khan University Hospital nurses to the association. It offered him a chance to serve and support his fellow nurses, advocating for them and bringing back opportunities and lessons that would help build their competencies. "I've been able to coordinate and organise several conferences, networks and speakers. And also coordinate nurses' learning. Being a point person for the department of medicine for continuous nursing education has been extremely gratifying for me."

Deeply aware of the opportunities and possibilities that education and training bring, David went on to pursue his master's degree in epidemiology at Kenyatta University. He believes that his continual pursuit of education opens up new frontiers that enable him to serve the patients that he works with each day. "In the medical ward one sees all kinds of conditions; these are patients who are stable, who you

can interact with, but you need to be ready to address different types of medical challenges." With his tenacity and forbearance, there is little doubt that David will ensure he is always equipped to meet the future.

"I REPRESENTED THE HOSPITAL AS ONE OF THE ASSOCIATION OFFICIALS, AT BRANCH AND NATIONAL LEVELS. IT REALLY OPENED MY EYES TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR ME AND MY COLLEAGUES."



LUCY AKOTH MAKHULO

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Nurse

Moi County Referral Hospital



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

As a little girl growing up in Busia County, Lucy Akoth Makhulo knew she wanted to be a nurse. A natural empath, she was drawn to helping others and serving the community. In addition, her maternal aunt was also a nurse. It was, therefore, no surprise that after high school Lucy applied and was accepted for a Nursing Certificate course at Nakuru Medical Training College.

“After the training, I secured a job at Coast General Hospital where I worked for 11 years,” she says. “I’m currently in my 10th year at Moi County Referral Hospital, my second place of work.”

Lucy has a warm, welcoming nature, and as she strolls through the hospital’s corridors she stops to exchange greetings with both patients and colleagues.

“Having worked here for so long, the people know me. When I’m walking in the town, I often come across former patients who call me by name and update me on their health. It’s humbling to know that I have impacted their lives positively,” she says.

For a long time, Lucy had wanted to upgrade from an Enrolled Nurse to a Registered Nurse. She felt the additional skills would greatly improve the quality of service she gave to patients, boost her confidence and even secure her a promotion at work.

“Being just an Enrolled Nurse, I didn’t always feel at par with my colleagues,” she confides. “The certificate course training I received at Nakuru Medical Training College was rather basic. I used to apply to different colleges for a diploma course but for some reason, I was never accepted. My dream came true when I was accepted for the Aga Khan University’s diploma course in 2012.”

As a mother of three, Lucy was particularly grateful for the scholarship from the Lundin Foundation that covered 75% of her tuition fees.

“The grant enabled me to complete my studies without struggling financially. And since the financial part was covered, it was easier to concentrate on the training. The schedule was also easy to manage. We would go to Kaloleni for a week or two, after which we would go back to our families and resume work,” she says.

Her typical duties include attending to pregnant women, helping with both normal and caesarean births, and she praises the training at AKU-SONAM for upgrading her knowledge and boosting her confidence, “Nowadays, most patients want to know exactly why they are getting a certain test or treatment. Thanks to my training, I’m able to confidently explain this to them. I can also competently discuss with my colleagues which course of treatment I think is best for a patient.”

“TRAINING FROM THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY IS TRULY UNIQUE. I ACQUIRED RESEARCH SKILLS THAT I USE TO UNDERSTAND A PATIENT’S AILMENT BETTER AND ULTIMATELY DELIVER BETTER SERVICE TO THEM.”



**OUR
ALUMNI**



UGANDA

Known as the country with the world's youngest population, Uganda has an overall population of about 41.8 million, almost half of whom are under the age of 15. While the leading cause of death is still HIV and AIDS, Uganda's greatest success story is how concerted efforts have turned around its HIV/AIDS epidemic of the nineties to achieve a prevalence rate of less than 7%.

In this densely populated country, physical access to healthcare services is not difficult; however, many health centres and dispensaries still struggle to provide quality care due to shortage of health workers and equipment, drugs and diagnostic challenges.

Nurses remain the largest cadre of health professionals in the country, accounting for more than 80% of the healthcare workforce, with the vast majority being certificate or enrolled nurses.



MARY MUSOKE

THE TIRELESS MIDWIFE

Founder
Mama Maria Clinic



THE TIRELESS MIDWIFE

At 60-years-old, Mary Musoke has spent more than half her life in service to others. Mulago Training School was her first stop 38 years ago in a profession that has brought her immense satisfaction. It is only 10 a.m. and her Mama Maria Clinic at Kagoma, Kawempe District, is teeming with mothers and their infants. Some are expectant. Many await their turn from across the dirt road where motorcycles zoom by every few seconds. Mama Maria, as she is fondly referred to here, has truly captured the heart of the community. She is excited at the idea of bringing life into this world and nurturing it.

“I delivered these twins five years ago, and we have just found out the mother is expecting another set.”

While hers is not the fanciest of clinics, to Mama Maria it is far better than the single-room, two-bed delivery centre where she started when she resigned from the National Referral Hospital at Mulago. During her eight years in public service, Mama Maria felt very little job satisfaction. It broke her heart that she was not able to give the personalised care that attracted her to the profession in the first place.

“Sometimes you would miss a chance to speak to mothers and give them advice because you were very busy. You work as if you are a soldier. Mothers fear you,” she says.

To whom much is given, much is expected. Her clinic was doing relatively well. She was earning more than she was previously, and her patients seemed happy with her services. However,

it soon became apparent running a private clinic required more knowledge and skills. She needed an upgrade from her diploma in nursing. A friend spoke highly of AKU-SONAM and she was sold. A few years shy of 50, Mama Maria enrolled for a BScN. She was the oldest in the class. Her younger classmates were puzzled as to why an established midwife who owned a clinic would go back to school.

“The mothers need a more qualified person because when you are deep in the community, you are king of the community. You have to be king in knowledge and skills, especially when you talk about health. There is no room for guesswork.”

Her time at AKU-SONAM both shocked and impressed her. The computer-based course demanded new skills from Mama Maria, which she loved. The well-equipped library was instrumental for her research modules, and the leadership and management modules moulded Mama Maria into an outstanding manager.

“After my graduation in 2005, I was elected President of the Private Midwives Association, where I have served for two terms.”

The exposure from travelling the world has her heaping praise on AKU-SONAM. She also applauds the alumni follow-up system.

“Whenever AKU has opportunities for short courses, they call and ask if I am interested. They still remember I am a daughter of the Aga Khan University.”

The little girl who decades earlier had watched mothers holding their babies and working in banana plantations, today works hand in hand with traditional birth attendants to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality. She encourages them to send mothers to her for postnatal clinics.

“I WANT MY CLINIC TO BECOME A MIDWIFE-RUN MODEL MATERNITY HOME IN UGANDA WHERE PEOPLE FROM WITHIN AND ABROAD COME TO LEARN BEST PRACTICES. THAT IS MY DREAM. I AM RETIRED BUT I AM NOT TIRED!”



ROSEMARY OKELLO

THE INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATOR

Principal
**The Good Samaritan School
of Nursing and Midwifery**



THE INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATOR

Rosemary Okello was born into a family of medical practitioners. Her grandfather and father were Clinical Officers, while her grandmother was a midwife. “I love nursing. It is in our blood,” she says.

In her quest to live out the family legacy, Rosemary set out to get a diploma in nursing and later acquired another in community health. During her nursing practice, she acquired a passion for teaching. She then trained as a tutor, and when her husband passed away she left nursing in pursuit of a full-time teaching job. She found the ideal teaching job in South Sudan. It gave her satisfaction and purpose.

Despite her contentment with her new career, Rosemary was bothered by the paucity of training schools in Lira, her hometown in Northern Uganda. In 2009, she packed her bags, made her way back home and started the Good Samaritan School of Nursing and Midwifery. It was the first private training school in the area. “I started with 20 students, then 35, then 53. Today, we have as many as 300 registering annually.”

Two years later, a friend who had graduated from the Aga Khan University challenged her to go back to school and acquire more knowledge. Madam Principal was not quite sure how this would work, given that she was then in charge of 50 students. Moreover, the 540km she had to cover weekly to get to the suggested institution – AKU Kampala – was daunting. It all seemed like such a hassle, but her drive would not let her rest. She set her ducks in a

row, delegating certain roles, then enrolled for a BScN. It is one of the best decisions she has ever made: “I am very proud to have been a part of AKU. I always tell people AKU made me who I am.”

While the courses greatly expanded her scope of knowledge, Rosemary believes that it is the skills and lessons she picked up indirectly that have had the greatest impact on her as a manager: “We had to work hard to hand in our assignments on time. My time management skills improved tremendously given that I also had a school to run.”

Rosemary acknowledges the impact learning about the nursing process has had on designing Good Samaritan’s curriculum: “A holistic approach of giving care is what I am now imparting to my students. AKU made me realize that you have to look at the whole person throughout the nursing process.”

In Rosemary’s office hangs a portrait of her smiling widely, resplendent in her green and white AKU graduation gown. Her shelf is full of books. “One day, out of the blue, the Principal called and asked me to go see him at the University. I sent my daughter, who was in the capital, because it seemed more convenient. She was given a ton of books; she could barely carry them herself. I wondered what I had done to deserve the kindness I had received. Those books are the ones my tutors and I now use as references.”

Rosemary’s dreams are sky high. More important, she strives to make them a reality. By mid-December 2017, the foundation stone had been laid for the third level of a hospital she is putting up in Lira Town. The problem-solving educationist believes she will be killing two birds with one stone once the project is completed: “My students go for their internships in places as far as Kitgum, which is about 114km north of Lira. The population here is growing. The referral hospitals can get congested at times. I believe I can give my people quality services while ensuring my students get training closer to home.”

“NURSES AND MIDWIVES CAN CREATE THEIR OWN JOBS. WE ARE JOB MAKERS, NOT JOB SEEKERS.”



STEPHEN WANIALA

COMMITTED PUBLIC SERVANT

Assistant District Health Officer
In-charge of Maternal and Child Health
Bulambuli



COMMITTED PUBLIC SERVANT

While growing up in Bulambuli District in Eastern Uganda, Stephen Waniala does not remember seeing a male nurse. He admired how nurses carried themselves and wondered if the notion that the profession was only for women was something that could be changed. He decided he would at least try: "I believe nursing is my calling. I was moved by the empathy I saw in nurses. I realised that it is a delicate and noble profession that a man was capable of handling, despite the understanding then that men ought to do more 'manly' jobs."

In November 1995, Stephen began the journey of training as a nurse at the Kabale School of Nursing. He then proceeded to Jinja School of Nursing for his diploma. Five years later, he heard about AKU-SONAM for the first time. "There was a team from the Aga Khan University that came to a seminar I attended. I was in awe of how well-researched and clear their presentations were. I approached the team for inquiries. It was not long before I joined the Aga Khan University School of Nursing and Midwifery for a bachelor's degree in nursing."

Unlike other institutions, the Aga Khan University had no boarding facilities for students. For Stephen, there was more to contend with. The part-time work-study arrangement meant that he had to commute to Kampala to attend the two days of classes: "I would travel from Kampala to Mbale, then from Mbale to Bulambuli, a total of about 270km one way. I had to cover about 600 km every week for two years."

The pressure that came with work, travel and coursework was immense. Stephen focused on the goal. "I enjoyed the lessons and the fact that the labs and library were so well-equipped and up-to-date. This lessened the research burden and saved time. The effective learning environment eased stress and fatigue."

Stephen also benefitted from the scholarship programme. "The degree course is not cheap, so it was such a relief to know that part of my tuition fees was taken care of. I concentrated better at work and school and was pleased with my performance on both ends."

Upon graduation, Stephen was immediately appointed Assistant District Health Officer. He was elated at the recognition, especially because he realized as he went about his duties what a great decision going to AKU-SONAM had been.

"My research skills from the University came in handy. I especially appreciated the evidence-based learning module. The more I put what I learnt into practice, the more things improved."

Despite the fact that he was not practising nursing in a hospital, Stephen recognised that his skills and expertise were needed at policy-making levels. The fact that he was a trained nurse was a plus, as he had first-hand experience of nursing in rural Uganda. He helped improve staffing, facility upgrades and capacity-building.

"I am greatly involved in support supervision in the district. You cannot mentor another if you have not been in their shoes at some point. When I took office, I saw the need to encourage excellence in the workplaces. My team and I worked to implement the Scheme of Nursing policy document. Working conditions improved and nurses became inspired to go back to school."

Since his graduation in 2012, Stephen inspired four people to join AKU-SONAM's upgrade programme, including two men.

Stephen is now pursuing his master's degree in public health and leadership at Mukono University. He hopes that he can continue championing for safe motherhood because "mothers are the backbone of the nation."

**"NURSING IS A CALLING,
NOT JUST FOR WOMEN
BUT FOR MEN TOO."**



SISTER PETUA KIBOKO

**AN OUTSTANDING
CHANGE AGENT**

Senior Principal Nursing Officer
Lira Regional Referral Hospital



AN OUTSTANDING CHANGE AGENT

Small in stature but with a large heart, Sister Petua Kiboko is the Senior Principal Nursing Officer at Lira Regional Referral Hospital situated in Northern Uganda. Her well-lit office is dotted with posters displaying both health-related and religious messages. One reads, “In every desert of calamity, God has an oasis of comfort.”

Sister Petua recalls the day in her childhood when her brother fell sick and was rushed to the hospital: “A nurse wearing a white uniform and a red belt came, greeted and looked after my brother. She treated him so well, and that motivated me to become a nurse.”

By 1983, she had completed her nursing training at Mulago School of Nursing and Midwifery and secured one of three nursing posts at the Mulago National Referral Hospital available for new graduates. At Mulago she noticed the different-colour belts that various nurses would wear. “I saw nurses putting on yellow, red and black belts. Mine was yellow. I was determined to rise up the ladder. I went back to school, studied midwifery and got a red belt. I later earned the black one after I did a management course and got promoted to a senior position.”

Sister Petua was flying high, spurring her on to learn and do more. She wanted to acquire as much knowledge as possible in order to become a leader who could influence change. She completed a diploma in public health, then acquired a master’s degree in management. With her experience and education, she was posted to Mbarara.

When she was transferred from Mbarara to the north in 2012, she realised she needed additional skills. A few inquiries later, she enrolled at AKU-SONAM for a BScN. Although she had prior experience in management, the management module at AKU-SONAM was instrumental in helping her handle her nurses effectively as the focus was on best practices in the nursing sector. “I value my staff because I cannot do it all. When I support and guide them, they are able to perform as they are expected to. I often consulted with my AKU management lecturer on how to handle human resources at the hospital.”

While at AKU-SONAM, Sister Petua was identified as a change agent. Her final research project on infection control with a focus on waste management impressed the faculty so much that they invited her to present the paper at a nurses’ conference. From that conference, the Makerere School of Public Health selected her to participate in a Leadership, Management and Governance course. This time, she narrowed her focus to neonatal sepsis. “I wrote a paper on neonatal sepsis and because of what I had already learned at AKU, it was easy for me to present with confidence and inspire others.”

Having identified the accelerators, Sister Petua enlisted the help of staff to put in place correctional measures in the maternity ward, neonatal intensive care unit, operating theatre and paediatric ward. Soon the sepsis rate dropped to 0.6%, and the hospital management authorised the expansion of the project to all units at the hospital.

“Nurses come and tell me, ‘I went to such and such a place, they were talking about you. I went to this other place; they were saying you have done very well here,’” Sister Petua says.

Sister Petua is the recipient of many awards, among them Best Performing Nurse in the country and recognition from the WHO and Ministry of Health as a country leader. The outspoken overachiever believes she still has her work cut out for her if she is to leave a befitting legacy.

“I’M PROUD OF THIS UNIFORM BECAUSE OF THE SENSE OF IDENTITY IT GIVES ME. PEOPLE SEE A NURSE IN ACTION.”



ROSE KIWANUKA

THE TRAILBLAZER

Founder
**Palliative Care Association
of Uganda**



THE TRAILBLAZER

Rose Kiwanuka was very enthusiastic when she enrolled at Nsambya School of Nursing. It had been a long time coming, since primary school, where she had first taken an interest in people's well-being as Health Prefect. Three months into her course at Nsambya, she and her fellow students were taken into hospital wards to begin their practice on simple procedures such as checking patients' temperature, weight and blood pressure.

"One of my most traumatising experiences when I began was when they made me observe a dying patient, who was gasping for breath. I was in such great panic that I ended up fleeing the room. A Senior Nurse followed me and advised me to be strong," Rose recounts. Despite the shaky start, she was determined to be a nurse. In fact, that experience would inform her decision to go into palliative care six years later.

"One of the major challenges as a nurse was my inability to prescribe drugs. Patients would keep asking for painkillers, yet my hands were tied." At the time, no training institution in Uganda had palliative care in its curriculum, so Rose went to Oxford, Sunderland and the Netherlands to train as a palliative care nurse. She was the first Registered Palliative Care Nurse in Uganda.

In 2013, Rose enrolled for a BScN at AKU-SONAM. She graduated in 2015, fully equipped with leadership skills and confidence. "I needed to attain that degree to feel competent enough

to interact with the Ministry of Health officials and district health officials about pushing the palliative care agenda. For palliative care to grow, I needed to go out and advocate for it at different levels to ensure that its awareness continuously spread throughout Uganda."

Armed with nothing but faith, Rose moved to the Palliative Care Association of Uganda – an organisation she founded while still employed. It had a few members, but no employee or office. "I was the sweeper, administrative assistant, accountant and country director. I was passionate about palliative care, so I kept writing the reports with the skills I gained from AKU. Those reports attracted donors. Today, the association has its own campus, with offices and 15 employees."

"During trainings, I would sensitise nurses to the fact that diseases like cancer were everywhere. Little did I know that it would hit me closer than I could have imagined." Rose was diagnosed with cancer of the colon in 2017. "I was in disbelief. I could not imagine that I – a person who had been supporting vulnerable patients – was now a cancer patient."

It was a lot to take in, but Rose believes everything happens for a reason. She is glad that she made the investment in growing palliative care in Uganda, and now benefits from the effort. "Although I was initially shocked, I'm glad to say that I have not faced any physical pain. I have the right medication and people available to prescribe and administer

it. Moreover, I have not had to endure any psychological stress, thanks to the people who have been there to comfort me. This is what I had been working towards."

Out of the 112 districts in Uganda, more than 95 have palliative care centres. Uganda is the only country globally where nurses are allowed to prescribe morphine to terminally ill patients, free of charge. Rose's achievements had her invited to a UN meeting to testify on the best practices and successes of these milestones. "I must triumph over this cancer. At least now I will be speaking from personal experience when I go to the field. There is still a lot of work to be done, and I will be there to lead my team to success."

"MY DREAM IS TO SEE EVERY PATIENT WHO NEEDS PALLIATIVE CARE ACCESSING IT."



DEBORAH GITTA

**CHANGING ATTITUDES,
CHANGING LIVES**

Founding Director
Divine Daycare and Nursery



CHANGING ATTITUDES, CHANGING LIVES

Every day, Deborah Gitta is received with excited giggles and knee-high hugs when she walks into her workplace. This is the world she has always dreamed of – healthy, happy children actively engaging in their learning. Deborah is the Founder and Director of Divine Daycare and Nursery located in Kajjansi, on the outskirts of Kampala.

Growing up in Gayaza, Deborah had her eyes set on a career in nursing from a very early age: “When I was young we used to have a banana plantation at home; those were my patients. I would get fish bones and vaccinate the banana plants, which I considered children. All my mother’s plants had holes. Whenever the banana leaves would come up, there would be so many holes my mother would complain, ‘Who is this disturbing my banana plantation?’ I used to tell her, ‘We’re vaccinating these sick mothers and children.’”

Decades later, armed with a diploma in nursing from Mulago, Deborah joined Mildmay International as a nurse. Thirteen years into it, she made the decision to go back to school. “I wanted to be a leader. At the diploma level we didn’t get much training in leadership, but my friends from AKU used to tell me that when you join the University, you become a better leader, you get more skills and you can become an entrepreneur.”

She applied and was accepted for a BScN. “The first thing I learned is a more organised way of assessing patients. It employs teamwork, like the nursing process. It impressed me so much. I learned how to do health assessment from head to toe, systematically. The nursing theory was also interesting.”

In January 2009, she graduated top of her class, having enjoyed a fulfilling two and a half years at the University learning about leadership, communication and community work. “When I graduated, I knew what I wanted. My passion was children, so when the organisation advertised for a job in childcare I sent in my application. I believe I got the job because of my degree qualification. I was transferred from the nursing department to the daycare department to work with HIV-positive children.”

At the time there was still a lot of stigma towards people with HIV, but Deborah turned hardship around and gave the children hope and a new lease on life, even starting a children’s choir that travelled overseas to perform during conferences. She also formed a positive speakers club where children would go to speak about HIV in schools. They would talk about stigma and how it affected them.

In 2013, Deborah took a bold step and resigned. She had decided that she wanted to deploy her skills and passion directly into the community in Kajjansi where she had lived for many years. She poured her entire life savings into starting Divine Day Care, a school

that provides quality learning services for all children, irrespective of their health or income status. At Divine, all children are welcome. She went around the community looking for children, especially those with special needs. Deborah opened her doors to children who had been rejected from schools for conditions such as albinism and physical disabilities. “Four years ago, I had a near-death case of a child brought in with severe malnutrition. His mother was mentally ill. I nursed him back to health and adopted him. I am his mother now.”

Deborah now looks forward to the day when Divine Day Care and Nursery will transform into a children’s hospital with a separate academic facility and lots of children and staff.

“PEOPLE SAY NURSES ARE JUST BEDPAN PEOPLE, BUT WE ARE MORE THAN THAT. WE CAN IMPACT THE COMMUNITY.”



JUSTINE NALWADDA

MOTIVATED IN SERVICE

Area Manager
Mengo District Hospital



MOTIVATED IN SERVICE

More often than not, nurses recount beautiful stories of how they chanced into the profession, but Justine Nalwadda's story is quite different. She recounts: "When I was in Primary 5, my mum asked me to tell her what nurses do. I told her I didn't know. She told me to get a stick and I got five strokes. I did not understand why I had been punished but decided to find out the answers just in case the issue was revisited. My interest gradually grew, and my mum began sharing bits and pieces about the profession with me. I later learnt that she actually wanted to become a nurse but never did."

Even though her mother wanted one of her children to take up nursing, Justine does not feel that the profession was forced on her. She genuinely loves helping people. "When I went home for the first holiday, my father asked, 'How are you practising giving injections? Are you practising giving injections on human beings or on banana trees?' It was really interesting telling them about everything I was learning at the Mengo School of Nursing."

Her passion and hard work did not go unnoticed; she was offered a job straight after graduation. She served in the theatre and children's ward for three years before she was headhunted by Mildmay International. Justine had only a certificate qualification, but her work ethic and brilliance impressed her boss. She recommended that Justine go for an upgrade, something Justine thought impossible at the time. Her salary was going towards training for her siblings, but her supervisor was relentless.

Justine finally gave in and enrolled for a BScN at AKU-SONAM. "As soon as I registered and attended the first class, my boss gave me a letter promoting me to work as a Registered Nurse. I was so motivated!"

She graduated 18 months later and was immediately promoted to Head of Nursing, supervising about 40 nurses. Working with children infected with HIV taught her so much about life. She wanted to be the best for them. If deaths occurred, it would not be because of ignorance or inexperience. "I had a special relationship with a child called Melania. She had chronic obstructive lung disease and had been admitted for nine months. She just became part of us. When she passed away, I just thanked God that I had done my part because I showed her all the love that I had."

Leadership and management modules at the degree level were intense but worth it. "The way you communicate with a nurse who has made a mistake matters a lot because you have to think about motivation. You must remember that she's human. You have to respect her, guide her, tell her the truth then move together. AKU was instrumental in my ability to make sound decisions and handle nurses well."

There was also the community health aspect. "My community health reports were far better than those I wrote before. Actually I read through them and inquired, 'Is it me who wrote this?' My computer skills also improved as there was always something new and exciting to learn."

Eight years later she is back to where it all started – Mengo District Hospital, serving as an Area Manager, stretching her leadership skills. She has also recently taken to teaching as she pursues her master's degree in nursing.

"Trainee nurses often express their disappointment with nurses' pay, but I tell them to hang in there. Money is a great motivator but not the only one. There is so much more. The future of nursing in Uganda is really bright."

"I DON'T WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING ALONE, SO I SHARE MY KNOWLEDGE AND MENTOR TOO."



AGNES KIRIKUMWINO

TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

Head Nurse In-charge of Neonatal Unit
Mulago Hospital



TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

One would be forgiven for thinking that after 16 years in nursing, Agnes Kirikumwino would have attained such expertise levels that going back to school would be unnecessary. However, Agnes was overjoyed when she heard about the AKU-SONAM upgrade programme. It had been a long time coming, and she was eager to enrol: “We had been longing for this degree in midwifery for a long time. When I heard that AKU was offering it, I immediately enrolled. It was also timely, as a couple of opportunities had passed me by because I didn’t have the papers needed.”

Agnes, who had previously trained at the Mulago School of Midwifery for her certificate and diploma qualifications, was amazed when she began her lessons at the University. “We were so warmly received during orientation. The lecturers were very patient and keen to make sure every student was moving at the same pace. The library was well-stocked and there was good internet coverage.”

AKU-SONAM is keen on nurturing professional nursing leadership both in Uganda and across East Africa. The courses build on the skills and knowledge of the nurses. During the course of her career, Agnes had discovered that she loved teaching: passing on knowledge to nurses especially on matters to do with neonatal care. Neonatal mortality rates across Uganda had been on the rise, and this triggered her desire to transfer the knowledge and skills she acquired over the years to new midwives. “My presentations became more organised

and precise. The writing and research module helped me write more attractive and concise proposals to donors and partners who sometimes funded my teaching trips around the country. I even started to monetize these skills when I got invited to do presentations during conferences,” she says.

Agnes observed that modules that dealt with evidence-based practices at the workplace and nursing care plans encouraged and reinforced the need to be extra careful while examining newborn babies and their mothers. Early detection of anomalies prevents unnecessary deaths.

Back at Mulago Hospital, where she is Head Nurse In-charge of the Neonatal Unit, Agnes saw attitude changes among some of the nurses who had enrolled for the upgrade programme. She noticed that they handled the mothers and newborn babies better and conducted health education with a new sense of purpose, making them more cohesive as a team.

She was also pleasantly surprised when the doctors and consultants began trusting her with tasks they had been sceptical about previously: “We were able to reason with the doctors on complex maternal care issues. My degree has earned me the respect of my peers.”

Among other things, Agnes would like to see

maternity units in hospitals getting better equipment to complement the trained human resource. “Midwives are going back to school more than ever. At Mulago, seven of us have upgraded from diplomas to degrees. Qualified midwives across the country are sometimes demoralized when even with our expertise, we watch as mothers and babies die because of lack of vital equipment. Policies need to be implemented. We are also advocating for better pay packages.”

Her degree was only the beginning. Agnes hopes that there will soon be a master’s degree in midwifery programme at AKU-SONAM. She is also excited about the hospital the Aga Khan Foundation is putting up, as it will serve to fill a gap in training and provision of health services.

“I WANT TO THANK THE ENTIRE AKU FACULTY FOR THEIR INPUT IN OUR LIVES. THEY MADE US FEEL AT HOME. I AM GLAD THAT MORE MIDWIVES ARE TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE TO STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY BECAUSE IT REALLY IS THE BEST AROUND.”



JULIET KIGONYA

YOUTH ADVOCATE

Founder
Nurses' Concern for Adolescents



YOUTH ADVOCATE

Juliet Kigonya lost her parents at a very young age. Her father died when she was one and her mother passed away three years later. Her mother had been ailing a long time, and at the tender age of four, Juliet understood that the insurgence that plagued the country then made access to medical services difficult.

“There was no medicine, the healthcare facilities were broken down and there were no healthcare workers. Even at Lubaga Hospital, where I was eventually taken, almost all its structures had been torn apart,” she says.

Seeing her mother unable to talk or move on her deathbed was devastating. She would not know how much influence this would have on her career choice until years later when someone suggested that she be an accountant. “Why an accountant? I want to take care of the sick, because of what my mother went through!”

Mengo Nurses Training School was her first stop. She got her Certificate in Nursing two years later and then worked at Mengo Hospital. While at Mengo, she decided to further her studies after a presentation by AKU-SONAM. She did not expect what she found at the campus when she enrolled for a diploma in nursing: “What surprised me was that you could relate with your lecturers as though you were old friends. They did not demand to be addressed in titles. That...touched me so much. I also liked that you could work as you study because I didn't have the money for fees. Fortunately, grants from Johnson & Johnson eased the burden somewhat.”

The courses were eye-opening. “When I was doing my community studies module, I was touched when the lecturer described the sexual and reproductive health challenges different communities went through. I kept asking myself why we spent so much time in hospitals and not on the ground addressing these challenges.”

During one of the community visits, Juliet met a girl who had been sexually assaulted by a motorbike operator who infected her with HIV. Despite their interventions, Juliet and her team were unable to save the young woman.

Nurses' Concern for Adolescents was birthed as a result of this newfound passion. She wanted this organisation to address adolescents' sexual and reproductive health issues and was also very clear that nurses would do the work. “Nurses were often perceived as rude and impatient. I wanted people to know that there are good nurses who can understand and share their problems.”

Since its inception in 2012, Nurses' Concern for Adolescents has been going to schools in Wakiso and Kampala to engage the youth in sexual and reproductive health education and sensitize them on the dangers of drug abuse. The results have been encouraging. “I have had young people calling as early as 3 a.m. when they've had unprotected sex. I've been able to take them to hospitals where they are screened for HIV and put on post-exposure prophylaxis, and I give God the glory for that. Others tell us about the unsafe abortions they have gone through, and we offer counselling.”

School nurses have benefitted too. “With support from the Ministry of Health and the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Council, I've been organising school nurses' workshops to reinforce levels of ethics and professionalism. We empower and equip nurses with skills to handle adolescents' issues. Once the adolescents know that they can trust nurses, our work will be even more effective.”

In her first year at the training school in Mengo, this rather petite but assertive woman was elected to serve as the national speaker for student nurses. Today, her resolve to reduce teenage pregnancies, HIV infections and drug abuse among adolescents is unshakable. Through her leadership other nurses have found a sense of purpose, and she encourages others to follow suit.

“A NURSE IS A VERY IMPORTANT PERSON. YOU CAN BRING CHANGE. YOU'RE ACTUALLY A CHANGE AGENT, USING YOUR SKILLS TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE, IN YOUR OWN SMALL WAY.”



CATHERINE ODEKE

MATRIARCH AT THE HELM

Commissioner of Nursing
Ministry of Health



MATRIARCH AT THE HELM

Like many nurses and midwives of her generation, it is the white uniform that drew Catherine Betty Odeke to nursing. Enamoured by the crisp uniforms as a child, she would put an empty white box on her head and pretend she was a nurse. The vision she had as a young girl has taken Catherine to the pinnacle of her chosen profession as she sits at the Ministry of Health headquarters as Commissioner of Nursing.

During a casual conversation with a friend in 2003, Catherine first heard of AKU-SONAM. The friend spoke highly of the BScN programme, and her interest was piqued despite years of experience working at different institutions. It was not long before she applied, was shortlisted and accepted into the programme.

The fact that the programme was designed to accommodate working nurses and midwives who could work by day and go to school part-time was a boon to Catherine. "In most of the health facilities, if a training opportunity comes up, you have to forfeit the job as you go for full-time studies. You have to look for a job again upon completion. It was very convenient for me because I could be a wife, head the nursing department and still be a student," Catherine says.

At the time, Catherine was the Head of Nursing at Uganda Blood Transfusion Services and would immediately put AKU-SONAM leadership and management principles to the test at her workplace. To her delight, the results of her studies were witnessed first-hand as service delivery improved significantly.

The small and compact classes enabled personalised learning. "When we used to go for our practicum in the wards they would ask, 'Who did this?' 'Students from AKU' would be the response. We had a good reputation in hospitals because we would not wait for doctors to come and do the rounds. It really was one of the things that I enjoyed in nursing. "

When Catherine graduated in 2006, she yearned for a place where she could practice the skills she had acquired through her advanced training. Her prayers were soon answered when a Senior Principal Nursing Officer position opened up at the Ministry of Health's Department of Nursing. "By God's grace, I made it. My experience and nursing degree from AKU must have made quite an impression."

Since then, Catherine served as an Assistant Commissioner before finally taking the reins as Head of Department in 2012. The soft-spoken matriarch's stay at the helm has not been without challenge. When she took office, work around the development of the Schemes of Service document had stopped. Other key policy documents had also been shelved. Catherine formed a taskforce and enlisted the help of AKU-SONAM through the leadership of Principal Joseph Mwizerwa to ensure the document was completed.

Her stint at the top also oversaw the drafting and development of the Nursing and Midwifery Policy document, which now awaits presentation in Parliament by the Minister of Health.

Although she does not get to wear that precious white uniform as often as she would love to, she is grateful that she is able to serve her colleagues and her profession in such a meaningful way. Ultimately, she wants the name Catherine Odeke to be remembered for having advocated for nurses' and midwives' skills to be taken seriously in the medical fraternity.

"A DOCTOR'S DEGREE IN MEDICINE DOES NOT CONFLICT AT ALL WITH MY DEGREE IN NURSING. IF WE BRING ALL THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS WE HAVE ATTAINED FROM OUR BACKGROUNDS TOGETHER, WE WILL BE OF BETTER USE TO OUR PATIENTS."



LEAH KAMAU

THE FIXER

Head Nurse
Kampala Hospital



THE FIXER

“My childhood village in Malaba, Western Kenya, had only one nurse. I admired her smartness, her way of doing things. She loved children, and I was among the number she loved. She often encouraged me and told me that I could make a good nurse,” Leah Kamau says. Leah hung on to the promised hope the nurse gave her. As soon as she completed her O-levels, she crossed the border into Uganda and enrolled at Kabale University where her father believed she would get quality education in nursing. Fourteen years later, Leah holds the position of Head Nurse at the Kampala Hospital.

Leah's former colleague who'd just completed her BScN at AKU-SONAM would not stop singing its praises. Leah was intrigued and sought to learn more about the programme. In 2011, she joined AKU-SONAM with the aim of attaining a BScN. “AKU is different,” Leah says. “From the word go, lecturers communicate their expectations, and there is no confusion. During the orientation, we were trained in first aid and introduced to ICT. This was quite new to me as I'd not gone this deep in my previous trainings.”

Most of her nursing experience had been at private hospitals, so Leah was pleasantly surprised that the University's curriculum incorporated community work. Her interactions with mothers and children in the villages as she implemented her project ultimately informed her decision to seek work in a community hospital after graduation, “Before I left, I spoke to the Student Affairs Officer and told her that I was resigning from my job because I was looking for something different. I proceeded to Isingiro in Western Uganda where I assisted the midwives there for a while. “

In August 2014, the management of Kampala Hospital visited the Aga Khan University Hospital, which had been touted as the best university hospital, and its graduates had earned a reputation for excellence. The hospital wanted to fill the position of Head Nurse and Leah's name came up. A match was made.

Despite the good fortune for Leah, the hospital was going through a rough patch. She had no time to sit and celebrate her new position; rather she found herself in management mode from day one. Leah used the needs assessment skills taught at AKU-SONAM to establish what the biggest challenges were in her new organisation. She then formulated Nursing Standard Operating Procedure manuals and trained the staff. She explains: “I needed to position key people who would help me bring change – ‘the change agents’. I decided to bring in fellow alumni from AKU as well as a few from other institutions. Today they are in key positions as Team Leaders or In-charges and Floor Managers.”

Under her leadership, Kampala Hospital has recorded major growth: “Six months into the job, a postnatal maternity block was opened. When I joined the organisation, there were approximately 46 nurses, but right now we are 96. Bed capacity in the maternity section has also gone up to 65 from 28. We are delivering 150 babies monthly, an increase from the initial 120. Moreover, there is a trained Special Care Unit that handles newborn babies. I have also introduced Continuous Nursing Education

(CNE) through which every department organises trainings. I go and train on whatever they have identified. Every second Saturday of the month I teach an antenatal class for mothers-to-be.”

Leah, who is currently studying for her master's, wants the hospital to be recognised as the best maternity centre in and around Kampala. The nurse from her childhood was right: Leah is the kind of nurse who really changes lives.

**“I AM REALLY POSITIVE,
I LOVE MY JOB AND I
LOVE MY PROFESSION,
ALL THANKS TO THE
TRAINING I HAD AT THE
AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY.”**



SARAH NAMIALO

**PASSIONATE ABOUT
PRIVATE PRACTICE**

General Secretary
Uganda Private Midwives Association



PASSIONATE ABOUT PRIVATE PRACTICE

What were you doing at the age of 16? Did you know what career path you wanted to take? Well, at 16, Sarah Namialo was at Nsambya School of Nursing and Midwifery in Uganda, training to be a midwife. From a very young age, Sarah always felt that pregnant women should be treated like sick people because they always looked so tired from carrying such a load in their tummies.

Due to her age, many people wanted her to start with nursing, but she was determined to be a midwife after her sister advised her that midwives take care of pregnant women and help them bring babies safely into the world. She was driven.

“I was eager to learn. I could go to the wards in my free times and learn different procedures: the delivery process, how they put in intravenous lines. Actually, in my group I was the first person to learn how to stitch an episiotomy.”

Two and a half years later, having completed the certificate course, she was posted to St. Francis Nagalama District Hospital in Mukono. She was 19. Sarah was a bit apprehensive at first, having to work far from home, but she settled in quite fast as she enjoyed her work and the company of fellow midwives. When Kibuli Hospital advertised for some jobs, Sarah applied and was accepted.

Sarah's first pregnancy, eight years into her job at Kibuli, changed her life. She would get so sick and weak that her productivity at work dwindled. She requested an unpaid leave. In the weeks that followed, people would come to her house seeking medical attention as they

knew she was a nurse. That is when the idea of private practice first crossed her mind.

“I first saw patients from my home, one by one. Then later the owner of this building actually was selling it, so my husband decided to buy it for me. We went to Nairobi and bought some simple instruments to start with and started the facility slowly.”

Private practice made financial sense, too. “My salary used to be 40,000 Ugandan shillings. On the first day of operating the facility I made 7,000, second day 25,000, third day 40,000. I made my salary within three days! The numbers even rose to 300,000. I had to employ another midwife to help me with the increasing workload.”

Five years into private practice, during a meeting she was attending with the Uganda Private Midwives Association, AKU-SONAM encouraged midwives to go back to school and upgrade their skills. Sarah took up the challenge and enrolled in 2005 for a diploma in nursing.

“Being a midwife, I became challenged with the nursing part. I decided to go back and do nursing to improve service delivery at my clinic.”

Course units like Foundations for Nursing, Pharmacology, Medical and Surgical Nursing, and learning how to make a nursing diagnosis and nursing care plan made quite an impression on her. Upon graduation in 2007, everything changed.

“My approach automatically changed. The assessment of patients was different. I diagnosed cases I couldn't before. I assessed the right cases on time. I could also administer different types of drugs in their right doses.”

Her AKU-SONAM diploma opened doors at the Ministry of Health and earned her the General Secretary's post at the Uganda Private Midwives Association.

Today, 18 years in private practice and a master's degree in nursing later, Sarah has made huge strides. Not only is she a national trainer with the Ministry of Health, she also collaborates with private organisations on various health agendas.

“I have trained people in different areas, including sexual and gender-based violence, adolescent health and emergency obstetrical care. I have coordinated a project in comprehensive abortion care for the Private Midwives Association since 2009. I've also worked with the Association of Gynaecologists as a Co-Principal Investigator in a study on helping mothers survive bleeding after birth in government facilities.”

“PRIVATE PRACTICE HAS GIVEN ME SO MUCH JOY. I AM IN TOUCH WITH THE COMMUNITY AND I GET TO MENTOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS.”



UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM
HEALTH CENTRE

WORKING HOURS

Monday - Sunday
24 Hours

After 20:00hrs
Please Use Back Door For Entrance
(Close To Ambulance Station)

Pharmacy
Medical Officer PC
Accountant Office
Nurses Office
Dressing Room
Wards
OTD
Ultrasound Room
Minor Theatre
Auditorium & Wing
Eye Clinic
Nurses & Hospital
WC

OUR
ALUMNI



TANZANIA

The largest country in East Africa, Tanzania has an estimated population of 59.09 million people. This is the highest population in East Africa, although because of the country's size, it has the lowest population density (67 per Km²).

Tanzania's major challenge is the predominance of communicable diseases, which is exacerbated by a shortage of skilled health workers. This shortage is especially severe in rural areas, where most of Tanzania's people live. The country relies on just 5.2 clinical health workers per 10,000 people. While addressing the skills gap is key, affordability of services is just as important. The government is striving to expand health insurance coverage to at least 50% by 2020 to ensure earlier adoption of services by patients facing early stage ailments. In the course of this study, nurses interviewed expressed optimism regarding the growth of Tanzania's health sector. Even with the challenges faced, most of them are dedicated to their profession and service to their community.



ROBBY MARWA

BORN TO LEAD

Assistant Head of Nursing
and Midwifery Services

Tumbi Referral Regional Hospital



BORN TO LEAD

From a young age, Robby Moses Marwa knew she was destined to be in the medical field, just like many of her family members. “There are several doctors and nurses in my family. When I was growing up, one of my aunts was training to be a nurse at Bugando School of Nursing. She would visit with us on weekends, and we’d escort her back to the college in the evenings. She made a huge impression on me, and I decided to become a nurse just like her,” she recalls.

She joined Muhimbili School of Nursing after completing her high school education and in 2003 was employed as an Assistant Nursing Officer at Pwani Referral Hospital. Desiring to advance her career, she enrolled for a BScN at AKU-SONAM in 2010 and graduated in 2014. Since then, her nursing career has grown – she is now the Assistant Head of Nursing and Midwifery Services at Tumbi Referral Regional Hospital.

She excitedly talks about her work, which she says brings meaning to her life. “I assist the Head of Nursing in the hospital; he might assign me duties or appoint me to represent him. Other than that, it’s my everyday responsibility to ensure the nursing operations in the hospital run smoothly, that every patient is attended to by nurses, the hospital remains clean and infection prevention measures are adhered to. As a leader, I have to understand the relationships between nurses and doctors, other health service providers and patients. I listen to nurses’ queries and challenges and help them find solutions, or forward the issues to the management,” she says.

Robby has found the training from AKU-SONAM to be highly beneficial to her work. “We did a lot of presentations, were equipped with computer skills and were even linked with students from other countries to be able to learn from each other. Critical thinking skills were especially emphasized. I remember that we used to create a clinical concept map. It seemed like plenty of work at the time, but now I see why it was important to learn. I have seen the importance of a patient care plan and nursing diagnosis,” she explains.

One of her proudest achievements is being part of a project on patient safety that Tumbi Hospital worked on in collaboration with Germany. “The project had various parts such as patient identification, ward/room identification, drug safety, infection prevention and control... and so on. I went to Germany to present my part of the project. I was able to do this confidently because of my training at the Aga Khan University.”

Robby was one of the beneficiaries of Johnson & Johnson scholarships. “The scholarship covered a huge part of the school fees, leaving the beneficiaries to pay only a small part. Without worrying about finances, I could focus on balancing work and studies.”

Robby is doing her part in promoting good nursing standards in her community. She hopes that by the time she retires she will have made a significant contribution in educating other nurses on these standards and implementing them.

“ONE OF THE MOST FULFILLING MOMENTS IN NURSING IS WHEN A PATIENT LEAVES HEALTHY.”



YASINTHA KAMALEKI

MOTIVATED IN SERVICE

Head of Nursing and
Midwifery Services

TMJ Hospital



MOTIVATED IN SERVICE

“I was an Assistant Matron during my BScN training at the Aga Khan University, but after I graduated in 2015 I was promoted to Head of Nursing and Midwifery Services. The management knew I could handle more duties,” Yasintha Kamaleki shares excitedly.

As Head of Nursing and Midwifery Services at TMJ, Yasintha supervises all the nursing activities in the hospital. “I go around the whole hospital from out- and in-patient, to the dialysis departments. I make sure that everything is going well in all three departments and that patients are satisfied. There are 68 nurses in the hospital, which has a bed capacity of 54. I’m also part of the quality improvement team and checking the nurses’ rosters. The heads in the different departments report to me, and if they have any case of misconduct or complaints from patients, we resolve it together,” she says.

One of the biggest challenges Yasintha encounters in her job is a high turnover of nursing staff. “We’re a private hospital, and some of the nurses we employ leave as soon as they get government employment. This creates gaps, and we have to keep trying to fill them. When we have new nurses, we have to start the work of training them all over again. I find that most nurses are not competent, and we have to train them ourselves, which makes it hard when they leave after we’ve invested so much in them. I discussed the problem with the management, and we’ve raised starting salaries to motivate nurses to stay.”

Yasintha was motivated to join the nursing profession because her mother was a nurse. “I looked up to her. I used to admire how she was dedicated to helping the sick, and how impressive she looked in her uniform. After high school, I knew that going to nursing school was the path for me. I have never regretted that decision. Helping others brings me joy and gives me a reason to wake up every day,” says Yasintha.

She believes that without her AKU-SONAM training, her career wouldn’t be where it is today. “Before joining the Aga Khan University, I didn’t even have competent computer skills. But now I can operate any computer,” Yasintha says with a laugh. “The leadership and management skills I learnt also help me a lot in my position. I gained confidence in myself and my skills, and unlike before, I can stand in front of any number of people for a presentation. Instead of nurses going to the matron or director whenever they had a challenge, I initiated a step-by-step process where they could try to solve the issue among themselves and with the heads of their department first. I also requested that the nurses be provided with badges and uniforms by the hospital.”

Although she was prepared to pay out of pocket, she was delighted when she got a scholarship courtesy of Rotary Club, which covered most of her tuition fees.

Having worked with nurses from other colleges, Yasintha says that the AKU-SONAM training is superior. “Nurses trained by the Aga Khan University are more knowledgeable and skilled. They also have the confidence to join discussions and make decisions regarding the patient’s welfare.”

Yasintha plans to pursue a master’s degree soon, after which she will eventually set up her own health facility to continue serving the people of Tanzania. “Providing employment for others will be very fulfilling to me. The autonomy of having my own facility will also allow me to implement the better measures,” she concludes.

“I ENCOURAGE OTHER NURSES TO PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES TO FURTHER THEIR TRAINING, ESPECIALLY THROUGH THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY. THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS YOU GAIN WILL BE INVALUABLE IN YOUR CAREER.”



MARIAM KARATTA

MODEL MIDWIFE

Principal Nursing Officer
**Comprehensive Community-Based
Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT)**



MODEL MIDWIFE

Poor dental health issues, tonsillitis and nasty hospital experiences are the unlikely things that guided Mariam Karatta to a career in nursing.

“I used to have dental health issues, which led to me having tonsillitis. Between ages eight and fifteen, I spent a lot of time in and out of hospitals,” she remembers. “I would meet nurses and doctors who were belligerent, to the extent of using abusive language with patients and their families. The experiences left an imprint on me, and I decided that I would one day become a nurse and that I would treat my patients better.”

It was with this resolve that Mariam enrolled for a home nursing and craft course at Msimbazi Centre in 1984. Afterwards she joined Sengerema School of Nursing for a Certificate in Nursing in 1987, and later Muheza School of Nursing for a course in midwifery.

After completing these certificate courses, Mariam secured employment at the Aga Khan Hospital in 1991 and was given an opportunity to upgrade to a diploma. “The Aga Khan Hospital offered to fully sponsor my education, which made it so much easier for me. I joined in 2000 and graduated in 2002.”

At AKU-SONAM, she particularly enjoyed midwifery, “I gained a lot in terms of leadership and management skills, which, to date, are useful to me. I won an award as the best in midwifery during my time at AKU. Then after I graduated, I was employed by AMI Hospital in

2009 in the maternity and intensive care units. I was an In-charge Nurse before being promoted to Matron. I worked hard to improve nursing in the labour area. I can confidently say that I left the department better than I found it,” Mariam says.

She started her current job at Comprehensive Community-Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT) in 2015 and is in charge of the fistula ward. “My major roles are to organise staff in providing services to clients. Most of our fistula patients come from rural areas, and in addition to treating them we have to educate them on self-care and offer some psychological support. We also orient them on family planning, preventative measures against fistula, breastfeeding and general care for their babies. Each day I work with doctors to identify which cases need to go for surgery and those that can be treated without surgery,” she explains.

As the Principal Nursing Officer, 49-year-old Mariam also handles responsibilities such as planning, supervision and organising. She believes that she has impacted her workplace for the better and hopes to be remembered not only for giving expert and compassionate care to patients, but also for helping build the careers of other nurses.

“I HAVE WORKED HARD TO BUILD JUNIOR NURSES’ CAPACITY AND CHANGE THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON PATIENT CARE. WE TEND TO RECEIVE NURSES FRESH FROM SCHOOL, SO THEY’RE NOT ADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR THE FIELD. I’M GLAD TO BE IN A POSITION TO HELP TRAIN THEM.”



BONVENTURA MTEGA

PATIENT SAFETY CHAMPION

Nurse Manager, Patient Safety
The Aga Khan Hospital



PATIENT SAFETY CHAMPION

Bonventura Mtega always wanted to be an engineer. He undertook his O-level studies at a technical school, which further strengthened his resolve to study engineering. “However, when my uncle was taken ill in 2006 and had to be admitted to hospital, I saw male nurses attending to him. My interest in nursing was piqued,” Bonventura shares.

He befriended one of the nurses, who advised him to join a nursing college and later AKU-SONAM. He graduated with a BScN in 2016. “I was impressed by how well my friend was doing, both professionally and socially. He was my inspiration to become a nurse. I joined the nursing profession, and I’m doing well in my career, financially and socially,” he says.

Bonventura is young and ambitious. He has worked at the Aga Khan Hospital for six years, during which he served in various roles including Bedside Nurse, Accident Management Nurse and Accident Management Nurse Manager. In his current position as the Nurse Manager in the Patient Safety department at the Aga Khan Hospital, he’s responsible for ensuring that all patient-related issues in the hospitals are resolved quickly and effectively. He’s also in charge of implementing measures to prevent patient mismanagement – such as giving the wrong treatment or operating on the wrong patient.

“Currently our hospital is undergoing accreditation by Joint Commission International, which is the most respected body in health safety accreditation. One of its standards is patient safety, and here at the hospital I’m the

one to ensure that the people on the ground are complying with the international patient safety standards. It is a big responsibility,” he explains.

“My day-to-day work involves documentation, documentation auditing, tracking compliance and training other healthcare workers on international patient safety standards. For instance, when a patient needs to be moved to other health facilities, we have to make sure that the ambulances are well-equipped and have well-trained personnel to facilitate the transfer.”

Bonventura is also in charge of conducting clinical audits on international patient goals in all departments across the hospital. “For clinical audits, we conduct inspections, do interviews and analyse data according to international patient safety goals and send feedback to the concerned department so that in case of gaps, they know how they can improve.”

He feels that his studies at AKU-SONAM have served him well in his roles. “When I joined the Aga Khan University, I didn’t even know how to use simple computer programs such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint. I had to undergo an information communication technology course, and now I’m confident in my computer skills. I have to do a lot of presentations, which is a skill I learnt at the University. Thanks to its focus on equipping students with analytical skills, I can competently analyse data – which is a key part of my job.”

His job is not without challenges. One of them is when the other auditors on the ground fail to submit their data to him in a timely manner. “I have to get data from them and analyse it before forwarding it to the institutional dashboard. Delays on the part of other auditors mean the entire process is delayed. I have noticed that most delays happen during weekends and public holidays, when there isn’t strict supervision. To resolve this, we’re planning to sit with the healthcare workers and educate them on the importance of consistency and having the right attitude.”

“I DISCOVERED THAT I HAVE A PASSION FOR TEACHING. MY AMBITION IS TO EVENTUALLY BECOME A LECTURER.”



REHEMA PANGA

THE HEROINE OF FAMILY CARE

District Nursing Officer (DNO)
Ubungo Municipal Council



THE HEROINE OF FAMILY CARE

As in many parts of the globe, male involvement in maternal healthcare services remains one of the obstacles to effective maternal healthcare accessibility and utilisation in Tanzania. In traditional settings where the society was very close-knit, a man's role in caring for a pregnant partner was minimal. However, in the modern world, men are encouraged to take a more active role in the care of expectant and new mothers. This is a healthcare goal that Rehema Panga, a District Nursing Officer (DNO) at Ubungo Municipal Council, is particularly passionate about.

"After graduating from the Aga Khan University with a BScN in 2013, I was transferred to the Mother and Child unit at Mbezi Health Centre," Rehema says. "The unit was facing some challenges at the time. I was able to make changes and turn the situation around. I worked through the community and encouraged more mothers, together with their partners, to come for services. To encourage male involvement, I talked with local government leaders."

Rehema's efforts bore fruit and soon Mbezi Health Centre had a record number of men accompanying their partners for mother-and-child clinic visits. "I got a big response, and Mbezi Health Centre came to be seen as a centre of excellence for male involvement. We regularly received guests from all over Tanzania, and some from Uganda and Kenya, keen to learn about the initiative I had founded. The initiative is still performing well, even after I left," she proudly explains.

"In Tanzanian households, the man is the key decision-maker. When he is involved in maternal healthcare, the whole family benefits; mothers are more likely to keep all clinic appointments, children get all vaccinations in time, the couple gets family planning education together and the man also gets his health check-ups," Rehema adds.

Her success with the initiative was possible in large part because of her training at AKU-SONAM. "The Aga Khan University curriculum teaches you how to think independently as a student and look for solutions. You learn to research, to document and to implement innovative ideas," Rehema expounds. "I recently wrote a proposal to request for more funding for family planning here at Ubungo Municipal Council. I was able to get the money, and it's now being used to improve services. For that, I utilised training from a programme called the Unusual Business Module. I was also one of the beneficiaries of the Johnson & Johnson scholarship, which made my studies financially viable."

As a mother-and-child health coordinator in Ubungo Municipal Council, Rehema supervises all family health services, including antenatal and postnatal care, family planning, cervical cancer screening, gender violence cases, child abuse cases, reducing mother-child infections and youth health services.

"I ensure that our services are of a high standard, which is a big role to play for the community I serve. I have to identify the challenges we face in service delivery and provide solutions," she says.

She's working hard to make Ubungo Municipal Council an exemplary region when it comes to reproductive and child healthcare. "This region had some of the poorest statistics on reproductive and child healthcare in the country. I'm implementing initiatives to improve our services and reach more people. This will be my legacy."

"NURSES SHOULD PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION. YES, NURSING IS A CALLING BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULDN'T TAKE IT PROFESSIONALLY AND GO FOR THE BEST TRAINING."



EMELDA KIVUMBI LWENA

LEADER, MANAGER, NURSE

Head of Nursing Services
**Comprehensive Community Based
Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT)**



LEADER, MANAGER, NURSE

As a little girl growing up in Nairobi, Emelda greatly admired nurses. Their crisp uniforms with matching caps captured her childhood imagination. But what she liked even more was the way they took care of each patient. “I’m a caring person and that aspect really drew me to the profession. After high school, proceeding to nursing school felt like a natural choice for me.”

In 1993, she joined Muhimbili School of Nursing to pursue a diploma in nursing. After completing the course in 1997, she worked as a nurse for a decade before joining AKU-SONAM in 2007 where she graduated with a BScN in 2010.

A jovial woman, Emelda is now the Head of Nursing at Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCRBT). The organisation works to prevent disability, provides affordable medical and rehabilitative services and aids empowerment of people with disabilities and their families. It also seeks to prevent disability through early identification by strengthening maternal and newborn health in Dar-es-Salaam.

“At CCRBT, my main responsibility is supervising nurses,” Emelda explains. “However, mine isn’t direct supervision for the nurses; there’s a chain of other leaders under me who have direct access to the nurses. I make sure that the nurses adhere to the standards and have the right skills and knowledge to deliver care to patients. I mentor nurses, provide capacity-building services and help with training.”

She currently has over one hundred nurses under her mandate. “My nursing team is made up of different cadres. Eight of them are in managerial roles where they directly supervise the operational and clinical bedside nurses,” Emelda says.

Additionally, Emelda handles the financial responsibilities of her division. “I have to develop the annual budget for the nursing team and nursing activities. Our hospital is donor-dependent, so my efforts help the department dealing with donors to know what we need and make the proper provisions,” she explains.

Emelda continues to use the scientific problem-solving method, a skill she developed while at AKU-SONAM. “With this skill, I don’t jump to conclusions regarding any problem I’m dealing with. I analyse the root cause and make a decision that is sound. I’m committed to learning new skills every day. For instance, I didn’t know much about accounting and finance before, but every day I make sure I learn something new about it. In my role, I have to consider costs of different things, so developing accounting skills is necessary. When I was at AKU-SONAM, one of the things I enjoyed was the community work we did when we went for field studies. That opened my eyes to the needs of the communities we would be serving,” she says.

As a leader, she treasured the leadership management module. “It helped me become more confident and assertive,” she explains. She also learnt the importance of standard operating procedures. “Properly documented standard procedures provide guidelines, make work easier for everyone and prevent double standards.”

To other nurses, she has this to say, “As long as you choose this profession, be at your highest performance and remain totally motivated despite difficult days. Do it with your heart. Remember, nursing is a profession, it’s not just a supporting role.”

“AS NURSES, IT’S EASY TO FALL BACK INTO SUPPORTIVE ROLES TO OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND FORGET THAT WE ALSO NEED TO BE LEADERS AND MAKE DECISIONS.”



MTANI CHILINDI

THE ENTREPRENEUR

Nurse Anaesthetist
Mbagala Rangi Tatu Hospital



THE ENTREPRENEUR

When Mtani Chilindi was selected for nursing training at Muhimbili University after his secondary education in 1990, he was baffled. At the time, nursing was seen as a female-only profession. The only men he knew in the medical field were doctors, pharmacists and lab technicians.

“Honestly speaking, even while studying I didn’t feel motivated by the profession,” he confides. “But I didn’t have much of an option because I was from a financially challenged family. They wouldn’t have been able to send me for A levels or another self-sponsored program.”

His motivation and love for the profession developed with time, and Mtani no longer regrets the path that chose him. “I realised that I had been handed a great opportunity to grow individually and also help my family. Embracing the profession has changed my life for the better. I’m revered by both my colleagues and my superiors in the Ministry of Health.”

In 2006, Mtani established his own company – Mtani Dispensaries and Investments – through which he provides affordable healthcare in rural areas. The company currently employs 200 people, something that fills Mtani’s heart with pride.

“Rather than benefitting only myself and my family, now I get to advance the nursing profession by employing nurses, too!” he quips.

He juggles his responsibilities at his private company with his job as Nurse Anaesthetist at Mbagala Rangi Tatu Hospital, where his roles are not limited to providing care. Mtani also has managerial duties, supervises other nurses and teaches.

Mtani graduated from AKU-SONAM with a BScN in 2009. His tuition fee was partly sponsored by his employer, the Municipal Council. He has fond memories of the programme and says it has been instrumental in the advancement of his career. “The training I received broadened my knowledge and added to my confidence. The skills I learned are very useful to me here at Mbagala Rangi Tatu Hospital and at my own company. I always recommend the Aga Khan University to other nurses who want to upgrade their qualifications. There are many benefits to upgrading, including career advancement, salary raises and increased confidence at work,” he says.

Now 60 years old, Mtani still plans on working for another decade. After that he plans to focus his attention on his facilities while remaining open to other opportunities that may come his way. He’s also considering pursuing a master’s degree and hopes that the program will be available at AKU-SONAM soon.

“As I look forward to my retirement, I want to play a key role in implementing some positive changes in Mbagala Rangi Tatu and encourage other nurses to pursue higher education.” The path turned out to be exactly what this entrepreneurial health worker needed.

“ALTHOUGH I DIDN’T EXACTLY CHOOSE TO BE A NURSE, I DON’T REGRET THAT THE PROFESSION CHOSE ME. THROUGH IT I HAVE FOUND FULFILMENT AND BECOME A PERSON WHO IMPACTS MY COMMUNITY POSITIVELY.”



ETHEL MALLA

TEACHER, MENTOR,
CHANGEMAKER

Principal Nursing Officer
In-charge of Referral Systems
**Comprehensive Community-Based
Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT)**



TEACHER, MENTOR, CHANGEMAKER

Ethel was determined to become a nurse despite her father's wishes for her to pursue a commerce-related career. She even filled out application forms for a commerce course at Mzumbe University in Dar es Salaam under pressure.

"Unfortunately, due to financial challenges, I couldn't go for the course and had to get a part-time front office job. I continued praying for an opportunity to study nursing. I used to regularly see a certain nurse going to work every morning, and I remember that it fuelled my desire even more," Ethel says.

On her 20th birthday, her father sent her a gift. When she opened it, she couldn't believe her eyes – it was an admission letter from Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University (KCMC)! She had sent an application to the School of Nursing and forgotten about it.

Unlike other colleges she had considered, this one was affordable. After graduating, she was employed by the same institution as a Nursing Officer, and in 2005 she secured employment as Junior Nurse at the Aga Khan Hospital in Dar es Salaam. In 2006, she applied to the AKU-SONAM to upgrade her diploma certification to a BScN degree.

After graduation in 2009, Ethel's responsibilities grew. "I joined the Aga Khan Hospital as a Junior Nurse. But by the time I left, I was a Senior Registered Nurse. In my last month working there, I was promoted to the Assistant In-charge of the Accidents and Emergency Department."

At that point, Ethel felt the need to explore a different dimension of her career. "One of my lecturers from the Aga Khan University, who knew how much I liked sharing my knowledge, encouraged me to venture into nursing education. I secured a teaching position at Massana College of Nursing where I taught for six and a half years."

Ethel looks back at her years of teaching with pride. "Together with a couple of other AKU alumni, I made a difference to the quality of training at that college. Most of our students did really well, both in and out of school," she explains.

After the sojourn of a few years, she returned to practice when she joined Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT) as the Principal Nursing Officer. She serves as the Nurse In-charge of the referral systems. A key aspect of her role is strengthening the referral systems with various health facilities that collaborate with CCBRT.

"I meet nurses from various facilities as we seek methods to improve the referral system. This includes things like improving the ambulance network and documentation of the kind of care needed and delivered for both mothers and newborns. Through documentation and analysis, we identify problems in the system and work on resolving them to improve outcomes for mothers and their babies," she explains.

Reflecting on her training from AKU-SONAM, Ethel says that it has had a big impact in her career. "When I went into nursing education, I was able to train my students just like I had been trained. In my current job, my training helps me greatly with data documentation and analysis. My boss has confidence in my abilities and knows I can be counted on," she concludes.

**"AS NURSES AND MIDWIVES,
WE HAVE A LOT TO OFFER THE
SOCIETY AND SHOULD BE GIVEN
THE CHANCE TO DO SO."**



PENDO BUKORI

CANCER WARRIOR

Cervical Cancer
Screening Field Officer
**Tanzania Health Promotion
Support (THPS)**



CANCER WARRIOR

When Pendo Bukori talks about her work, her face gets animated; there's light in her eyes and a quick smile dances on her lips. You can immediately tell that she is someone who wakes up looking forward to her work and gives her all to her chosen profession.

Pendo is a Cervical Cancer Screening Field Officer at Tanzania Health Promotion Support (THPS) – a nonprofit organisation that works in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to improve the state of health in the country. Currently, the organisation collaborates with 15 health facilities in Pwani and two in Zanzibar – where they've set up cancer screening centres. This includes regional hospitals, district hospitals, health centres and a few dispensaries.

“My role is to supervise the various health facilities doing cervical cancer screening,” Pendo says. “I coordinate screening across the facilities, prepare training after highlighting capacity gaps in the centres and coordinate with the Ministry of Health for directives and guidelines. We have to make the ministry aware of the trainings we facilitate, and they give us guidelines to follow, books, registers and other such material. The ministry brings in the trainers, but I have to be around to supervise and facilitate the logistics.”

After these training sessions, Pendo prepares training reports that she later submits to the regional manager. She also follows up with the trained nurses and gives them hands-on mentorship in their work stations. “In-house

training isn't sufficient to master everything. During the mentorship sessions, I do one-on-one reviews and take the training to a practical level. After a nurse has attended to 50 screenings, we consider them competent and award them a certificate,” Pendo elaborates.

THPS ensures that the facilities they support have the relevant equipment and materials needed for cancer screening.

Pendo has been working for THPS since 2012, before which she managed Ocean Road Hospital's Cervical Cancer Screening department. She graduated from AKU-SONAM with a BScN in 2006 and has nothing but praise for the programme.

“I particularly appreciate how we were trained to do clinical assessments, which helps us identify what a patient's problem might be even before they go to the doctor. The course empowers a nurse to go a step further when dealing with a patient instead of having to rely on the doctor for all decisions. This can save patients' lives, especially in emergency cases. The Aga Khan University also equipped me with research, report-writing skills, management and planning skills that I use in my everyday work. In fact, after graduating I initiated a breast self-examination training for women at Ocean Road Hospital.”

Pendo's goal is to play a key part in ensuring that Tanzanian women are screened for cervical cancer and treated as early as possible. “My wish is to see more than 70% of women

screened for cervical cancer and for those found to be affected to receive the proper treatment and management.”

For this cancer warrior the road ahead has many challenges, but the changes that she is helping bring to life through screening provide an assurance that lives will be saved.

“WE'VE TAUGHT WOMEN HOW TO RECOGNISE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CERVICAL CANCER, AND THROUGH SCREENINGS WE CAN CATCH THE DISEASE IN ITS EARLY STAGES AND TREAT IT. THIS GIVES ME A GREAT SENSE OF FULFILMENT.”



VALLERIA MUSHI

A POWERHOUSE

Principal Nursing Officer
University of Dar es Salaam



A POWERHOUSE

When she graduated from AKU-SONAM's diploma programme in 2007, Valleria Mushi's performance was so impressive that she was offered a partial scholarship to pursue a BScN.

"I was one of the best students," she says with a smile. "When I was offered the opportunity to pursue a degree I was elated. I sought permission from my employer – the University of Dar es Salaam – and was allowed to continue my studies."

She graduated with a BScN three years later, before enrolling for a master's degree program in the UK. "For the master's program," she explains, "I had some sponsorship from the government through the Ministry of Health."

Armed with such training, Valleria is the soft-spoken powerhouse behind the University of Dar es Salaam's healthcare unit, where she has worked since 1999. The six-roomed facility serves a population of 3,800 students, in addition to the University's faculty members, their relatives and the surrounding community.

"This wasn't initially meant to be a healthcare unit; it's part of the students' hostel. That's why it's so small," she remarks.

As the head of the unit, Valleria oversees the other nurses, ensures that it is adequately stocked and attends to patients. Because the unit currently does not have a laboratory, it only handles simple cases and refers the more complex ones to bigger facilities.

"One of my main roles is to make sure that the

unit is running smoothly. When I come in the morning, I get a report from the night team about which patient has gotten which treatment. I also get reports from the other two shifts during the day. On the days we have a doctor in, he handles the consultations while my team and I register the patients. When we don't have a doctor, we handle the patients' treatments as needed," Valleria says.

The unit has regular outreach clinics through which they serve the neighbouring community. "We go out on days such as World AIDs Day or even Mother's Day. We weigh people, take blood pressure measurements, educate them on communicable and non-communicable diseases and advise them on healthy living," Valleria says.

Once a month or so, Valleria holds talks to educate the university students on health and well-being. "During these talks, we get a chance to pass out pamphlets that the students can share with their friends and relatives – further spreading the message."

Although Valleria feels that she is underutilized in her role, she acknowledges that her training has given her confidence to implement some changes. "Through the Aga Khan University, I learnt to take a more holistic approach to caring for patients. I learnt that nursing isn't just about giving medicine. After earning my BScN and the master's degree, I became more confident about suggesting and implementing different ways of doing things. In 2014 I even wrote a

paper on how to improve maternal healthcare in the country, although I'm yet to publish it."

Valleria wants to devote the latter years of her career to teaching. This, she says, will give her a great opportunity to share from her wealth of knowledge and experience.

"I WANT TO KEEP PROVIDING EXCELLENT PATIENT CARE AND TRAIN OTHERS TO CONTINUE IN MY FOOTSTEPS."



GUSTAV MOYO

A HEART FOR HEALTHCARE

Director of Nursing
and Midwifery Services

**Ministry of Health,
Community Development,
Gender, Elderly and Children**



A HEART FOR HEALTHCARE

When his best friend in high school died from heart disease, Gustav Moyo found his purpose. He knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he wanted to provide care for people facing illnesses and ease their suffering. “My friend was frequently referred to Muhimbili National Hospital from Songea Hospital in Ruvuma for specialised care. But unfortunately, he passed away before the end of our high school days,” he says.

It was with this loss in mind that after completing high school, Gustav joined Bugando School of Nursing in 1979 for a diploma, before joining AKU-SONAM for a BScN later in 2008.

Gustav nostalgically remembers his days as a student at AKU-SONAM. “I was a part-time student because I was also working for the government. My employer, the Ministry of Health, paid part of the fees for the course, making it easier for me. The training was exciting. The clinical setting complemented what we were learning in class, and critical thinking and independent learning were encouraged. Those were skills I could immediately apply at my job in the ministry. In fact, after the training I went on to supervise the review of the Nurse’s Act in 2010. That was the first time the act was reviewed after 50 years. That was a great achievement for me.”

Today, Gustav is the Director of Nursing and Midwifery Services in Tanzania’s Ministry of Health Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children. He excitedly talks about the position, in which his primary role

is advising the ministry on policies related to nursing and midwifery.

“The Ministry is made up of five divisions, one of which is Nursing and Midwifery – which I’m heading. I advise policy, ensure quality of services, and supervise nursing and midwifery services in the country.”

The position, which he has held for two years, both fulfils and challenges Gustav. “It’s a very important and challenging position. I feel privileged and humbled to be in a position where I can effect change at the national level. I am able to contribute towards the betterment of our profession, and given that nurses and midwives form the bulk of the country’s health workforce, the role is quite critical.”

Gustav is passionate and committed to ensuring better services for patients in Tanzania. In his time as Director he has developed and implemented six new policies and standards. “One of them is about compassionate and caring services by nurses and midwives. The standard emphasizes the caring component of our profession and is meant to guide nurses and midwives in providing compassionate care to patients. We develop these standards and policies to help nurses and midwives improve their services.”

Gustav also serves as the Vice President of the East and Central College of Nursing, one of the seven colleges under the East, Central & Southern Africa College of Health Sciences. “Not only does the college train

health professionals, it also plays a role in standardizing the curriculum for the region, which has a membership of about 16 countries.”

As he reflects on his future endeavours, Gustav notes that the Ministry of Health hasn’t really managed to tailor the health education system to respond to the needs of the majority of Tanzanians, especially in rural areas. This is something this dedicated nursing professional hopes to change.

“INFLUENCING THE QUALITY OF HEALTHCARE AT A NATIONAL LEVEL IS FULFILLING AND CHALLENGING FOR ME. I FEEL VERY PRIVILEGED TO BE IN MY POSITION.”



REHEMA MAHIMBO

DILIGENT AND DETAILED

Principal Nursing Officer
In-charge of Surgical Ward
**Comprehensive Community-Based
Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT)**



DILIGENT AND DETAILED

Rehema Mahimbo's father was a nurse, which inspired her to pursue the same career. "He was famous in Dodoma General Hospital," she reminisces. "I would regularly visit him at work and was always impressed by his dedication to patients' well-being. In their crisp uniforms, nurses and other medical professionals looked incredibly smart to me. I wanted to be just like them."

Today, as a Principal Nurse at Comprehensive Community-Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT), Rehema is living that dream. "When I report to work in the morning, as the head of my unit, I get reports from the nurses on duty. They update me on admitted patients, how they're progressing and if there are any who need special attention. I make sure that the necessary tests are done, that patients are well-prepared for surgeries and that everything is well-documented in the patient's file."

She often helps her patients, most of whom come from rural areas, to understand the holistic nature of health. "Through talking with a patient, you might discover that the root cause of their health issues is poor diet, so you have to advise them on that. I also educate them on childcare and reproductive health. Many of them are so happy and grateful that after they get well, they return with their babies so I can see how well they're doing!"

Rehema converted her nursing certificate into a diploma through AKU-SONAM's Nurses Upgrading Programme. "I was at AKU from 2002 to 2004. I was in the first intake, and I remember the facilitators gave us a lot of

support. Although I had set aside some money for tuition, I was delighted when I was offered a generous scholarship courtesy of Johnson & Johnson."

Her training has contributed a lot to her career success. "The skills I gained in training have played a huge role in my achievements. Before, I used to follow doctor's directions without question, but now I have the confidence to ask questions, analyse a situation and make decisions. I realised that as nurses, sometimes we're too busy and fail to document what we've done – most of us think only doctors need to document. Now I make a conscious effort to have everything well-documented. Documentation is a great communication tool between nurses and doctors and promotes better service for the patient."

She narrates the case of a patient who came to her hospital for delivery. "She had prolonged labour, and from her history I could tell that the risk of complications was high. I kept checking on her, updating her chart and requesting for a doctor to deliver the baby via caesarean section urgently. But for some reason, the doctor ignored my recommendations and we ended up losing both mother and baby. During clinical auditing, the doctor tried to shift the blame to me and other nurses, but thorough documentation showed that he was at fault. It's sad that we lost a patient, but we all learnt how important it was to document everything."

When she joined CCBRT in 2011, Rehema noticed that the process of giving patient reports violated patients' confidentiality. "We

used to give reports from bed to bed, which involved mentioning the patient's name and other confidential details. I introduced the practice of reporting in a different room where we can talk openly and later attend to the patient. I also made sure that every patient was given their medication as prescribed after I learnt that because of poor documentation, some used to miss their scheduled medication."

Rehema now has a bachelor's degree in social work and is looking forward to graduating with a master's degree in 2018.

With nursing advocates like Rehema, undoubtedly the profession and the quality of its services will continue to grow.

"I ASPIRE TO PUBLISH A BOOK OR PAPER ON THE NURSING PROFESSION IN TANZANIA. I'D LOVE TO SHARE WHERE WE STARTED, HOW FAR WE'VE COME, CHALLENGES WE'VE FACED AND SUCCESSSES WE'VE EXPERIENCED. I HOPE THIS WILL HELP CORRECT SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT NURSING AND ALSO PROMOTE THE NURSING PROFESSION IN THE COUNTRY."



VICTORIA BURA

BUILDING EXCELLENCE

Regional Nursing Officer
Dar es Salaam Regional Offices



BUILDING EXCELLENCE

“To be a great nurse, one has to have compassion and empathy,” Victoria Bura, a Regional Nursing Officer in Dar es Salaam Regional Offices says. “It has to come from your heart. That way you will be able to serve patients and also relate with your colleagues well.”

Some of the greatest lessons Victoria learnt from her time at AKU-SONAM when she pursued her BScN (2003–2006) were in communication and interpersonal relationships. “Relationships are at the centre of everything, and as a leader, learning how to communicate effectively is a crucial skill.”

“As Regional Nursing Officer in the Dar es Salaam region, my work is to make sure that health services – especially where nursing is concerned – are going on as planned. I monitor trainings for nurses to help them improve service delivery and upgrade their careers. Additionally, I participate in formulation of different health plans to make sure health equipment is available in health centres. Generally, I supervise the council’s plans to make sure nurses don’t face obstacles at work,” Victoria says.

In her position, Victoria also supervises facilities in the area to ensure guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health for nurses are implemented. “I don’t do supportive supervision for nurses only, but also the services they provide and the

procedures they follow. There are five councils in Dar es Salaam: Ilala, Temeke, Kigamboni, Kinondoni and Ubungo. My role is to ensure that they have the same nursing standard. I talk with different representatives from organisations and facilities in Dar es Salaam and advise them on the nursing guidelines,” she says.

With such major responsibilities, her position comes with various challenges. “In government facilities, one of the biggest challenges is understaffing. It’s not uncommon to find nurses doing extra shifts and serving too many patients. This leads to the overworked nurses making errors in procedures and mismanaging patients. One of my roles is also to make sure that health facilities in the councils have at least one nurse for each section. During peak hours, we also recommend pooling resources to the wards and areas with heavy workload. This makes work easier for the nurses. Nurses are also paid for extra shifts, which reduces complaints.”

Another challenge Victoria has had to deal with is nurses with forged certificates. “We found out that many nurses had forged certificates to get into the nursing profession. This was unfortunate because some of them were experienced, skilled and hardworking nurses, but we had to retrench them. This left a gap in the hospitals that is yet to be filled. We’re still checking certificates to make sure all nurses are qualified and fully registered.”

Victoria aspires to make sure that all nurses receive the necessary trainings to improve service delivery and boost their careers. “The strategic plan we have is to ensure all nurses receive trainings. Nowadays patients are very informed and can research on various illnesses online. We have to make sure that nurses keep up through continuous on-job training.”

“THE NEED FOR WELL-TRAINED NURSES IN TANZANIA IS HIGH. EDUCATING THEM IS CRUCIAL.”



GERWALDA MUMBA

A NURSE AND TEACHER

District Nursing Officer (DNO)
Ilala Municipal Council



A NURSE AND TEACHER

After graduating from high school, Gerwalda Mumba found herself in a dilemma. She had to make a choice between training to be a nurse or a teacher. Her heart was set on being a nurse although the training would take four years, compared to two for teaching. “When I was in secondary school, I had a minor accident and was rushed to the hospital. I was in awe of the nurses who attended to me and made me feel safe. I thought to myself ‘Why can’t I become a nurse just like them? It would make me really happy to help the sick and nurse them back to health!’”

She chose to pursue training as a nurse at Muhimbili University in 1988. To her amazement, her career in nursing has placed her in teaching roles. She remembers her first job in 1993 nostalgically. “At the time I was one of the few registered nurses at Temeke Municipal Council, so I was immediately given a unit as a childcare assistant. I helped the supervisor and also assisted the students who came for clinical practice. I would sit down with them, and find out what they had learnt and what challenges they had faced.”

A year later, she was appointed to teach at Dar-es-Salaam University (at the time known as Amtulabhai School of Medical Assistants). She greatly enjoyed teaching. “I liked the job, although I was rather intimidated by the responsibility,” she says. “I knew that failing my students also meant failing their future patients.”

Gerwalda later joined Muhimbili Teachers University and graduated in 2000 with a certificate in Advanced Nurse Education, after which she was employed by Ilala Municipal Council in various capacities and units where she continued her teaching and supervisory duties.

In 2007, she enrolled for a BScN at AKU-SONAM. “I didn’t want to stay at the diploma level. It was challenging for me because I had to balance work, studying and family. Also, as I didn’t get any financial assistance from my employer or the University, it was a very demanding and challenging period for me. With commitment and determination throughout, I made it work.”

Gerwalda says her training at AKU-SONAM has played a big role in her work. “The combination of theoretical and practical learning was highly effective. I remember how the training emphasized patients’ needs and the importance of having clear, organised records for each patient. In my work, I encourage documentation in order to serve our patients better. Thanks to my training, I became better in my leadership and management roles. From my experience, I can confidently say that AKU-SONAM offers the best training for nurses.”

Gerwalda is now the District Nursing Officer (DNO) of Ilala Municipal Council, a role she was promoted to in 2005. “At first I was reluctant to accept the role as I was intimidated by the responsibility. But with time I realised I was fully capable of handling the job,” Gerwalda says.

She supervises all nursing activities in the municipality and coordinates with head nurses in health facilities to organise capacity building for nurses. “For instance, if a new nurse is assigned to a post and the Head Nurse at the facility feels she’s not competent, I organise for her to be relocated to a facility where I can monitor her. I also check to make sure that their certificates are valid.”

After her training at AKU-SONAM, she applied for an online master’s degree in community development and economics from the Open University. A big believer in advancing one’s education and training, Gerwalda regularly encourages other nurses to follow in her footsteps and be all they can be.

**“NURSE TRAINING
REQUIRES BOTH
THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE
AND PRACTICAL SKILLS.
MOST SCHOOLS FOCUS ON
THE THEORETICAL PART
AND OFFER VERY LITTLE
PRACTICAL SKILLS. THE
AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
OFFERS BOTH.”**



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NURSES AND LEADERS IN HEALTHCARE IN EAST AFRICA MIDWIVES



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