Universal health coverage possible if nurses and midwives play their pivotal role

Kampala, Uganda, 8 February 2020 - Evelyne Amulun, a midwifery graduate at Aga Khan University (AKU), went to great lengths to pursue her education. For two years, she travelled over 600 kilometres from Karamoja to Kampala twice a week to pursue undergraduate studies at AKU’s School of Nursing and Midwifery.

“If I didn’t get a boda boda, I would risk hitching a lift from trucks that carry marble stones. There was no space for me inside the vehicle so I would hang on for dear life. From Mbale, I would take a bus to Kampala, a journey that lasted another 12-14 hours,” she said.

Despite these challenges, Evelyne managed to complete her Bachelor of Science in Midwifery degree and emerged one of the top students in her class. She was among the 142 graduates who were conferred degrees at the Aga Khan University’s 17th convocation ceremony in Kampala. Sixty-eight graduated with diplomas in nursing, 30 with Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees, 23 with a Bachelor of Science in Midwifery and 21 with a Master of Education degree.

The Chief Guest at the convocation ceremony, Prof. Francis Omaswa, who is the Executive Director of the African Centre for Global Health and Social Transformation said, “The Year 2020 has been declared as the year of the nurse and midwife and so your graduation today makes it very special. This is unlikely to happen again soon.”

Prof Omaswa who was the chief guest at the convocation ceremony called on nurses and midwives to be at the forefront in service delivery and leadership, as part of the movement to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Universal Health Coverage, UHC.

“I am personally convinced that if this happens, with nurses and midwives leading integrated, people-centered primary healthcare here in Uganda, we will actually achieve UHC that leaves no one behind soonest, and with the currently available resources,” he said.

AKU President Firoz Rasul said the University’s aspiration is to improve the quality of life in Uganda through the provision of relevant education in medical sciences and education that will prepare youth to address the country’s health and education goals.

“The Aga Khan University’s programme to encourage teaching excellence within the University was recently accredited by Advance HE in the United Kingdom. We are the first university in Africa to earn such accreditation,” said AKU President Firoz Rasul.

Construction of AKU’s largest capital project in East Africa is underway in Kampala, Uganda.
The 600-bed capacity Aga Khan University Hospital and Academic Centre will transform the country’s health system through delivery of international-quality care and enable access for low-income individuals. As a teaching hospital, it will educate outstanding health professionals and support research that helps solve Uganda’s health challenges.

Graduates applauded AKU for providing quality education and vowed to be change agents in their communities and in the country’s health workforce.

“It is in our mandate to design and create the future of nursing and our creation will be the inheritance of the next generation. In this era, we need to create education policies, systems and structures that are symbiotic and generic to our profession,” said Valedictorian Ndawula Paddy, a nursing diploma graduate.

Academic awards were presented to the best students: Bakkabulindi Patrick, a Bachelor of Nursing graduate was the top student achieving a GPA of 4.93; Everlyne Amulun, a Bachelor of Midwifery graduate had a GPA of 4.91 and Mutoni Suhamu, a Diploma in General Nursing had a GPA of 4.79.

The convocation ceremony was attended by diplomats, families of graduating students, AKU faculty and staff members.

Link to photos and video clips here.

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