



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

# ZANZIBAR

**NURSES AND MIDWIVES TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE OF HEALTH**







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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work of the School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM) in Zanzibar was made possible by several individuals and institutions whose support and partnership enabled the Aga Khan University to roll out our training programmes and upgrade hundreds of nurses.

Donors such as the Johnson & Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust, the German Development Bank (KfW) and Rotary International generously supported the programme in its early days through scholarships to students and various programme investments.

At the inception of the programme the following group of intrepid leaders midwifed the Zanzibar programme: Founding Dean Yasmin Amarsi, Inaugural Academic Head and Associate Dean Laeticia King and Academic Head of SONAM

Tanzania Khairunnisa Dhamani. We continue to be extremely grateful for their visionary leadership, which laid a strong foundation for this programme.

Within the wider Aga Khan University fraternity, Vice Provost and University Registrar Lou Ariano and Director of Alumni Affairs Abdul Haq Wahedna were instrumental in the programme, shepherding its continued impact in Zanzibar and beyond.

Curating the stories of the nurses of Zanzibar has been a monumental but rewarding task. The photos that so vividly illustrate the personalities of the nurses were captured by Christopher Wilton-Steer, Senior Communications Manager of the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). Within and beyond AKF, Christopher uses his photography to inspire others

to explore, experience and encounter new places, people and cultures.

The interviews with all the alumni were carried out by Eunice Siaity-Pallangyo, who patiently captured the experiences of these nurses in December 2017. The stories of our alumni were written by Mwhaki Muraguri, lead storyteller at Paukwa House, who was also responsible for the curation of this publication. The lead graphic designer was Victor Njoroge. Conceptualisation and development of this publication was led by Sharon Brownie, Dean of SONAM, and Yvonne Mathu, Regional Manager, SONAM.

We hope that these stories will continue to inspire, challenge and show the power of nurses and midwives for years to come.



# FOREWORD

## DEAN, SCHOOL OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY, EAST AFRICA.

The focus of the School of Nursing and Midwifery in East Africa is to develop nursing and midwifery graduates dedicated to **transforming health** and **improving lives**. Through our work we strive to ensure our programmes are of high quality, accessible, relevant and impactful.

We began training nurses and midwives in Zanzibar in 2006 and over several years graduated cohorts of nurses with diplomas and degrees in nursing and midwifery. This book is a dedication to the work of our alumni and their extraordinary impact across the Zanzibar Archipelago.

**“THIS WORK FOR US IS PART OF OUR INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF WORLDLY LIFE FOR CONCERNED COMMUNITIES.”**

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN

Our alumni remain a critical resource for us as they influence practice in the public, private and policy spaces in which they work. Many work with public and non-government institutions where they have become agents of change. Some have nursing education roles, while others can be found within the Ministry of Health, influencing policy and deploying leadership lessons on an even larger scale. The impact of our alumni continues to ripple out across health systems and the communities in which they practice.

I am both honoured and humbled to have been part of this project: meeting and talking with our alumni in their places of work, listening to their stories as they recounted tales of service, challenge, triumph and compassion. I extend my heartfelt thanks to them for their willingness to share so much about their lives and practice in this collection for all to read, enjoy and reflect on the widespread impact of the nursing and midwifery professions.

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



# REFLECTIONS ON OUR WORK

When we started off with the first intake of students, we honestly did not know the benefits we would witness. The programme was exciting, as we had never run a work-study and distance learning course before. Because of this structure, the students in the early cohorts spent a lot of time together dissecting lessons and materials. This built an incredibly strong bond between them as they were fellow learners and also supportive mentors to each other. The harvest that we are reaping more than a decade later is that many of these students have remained strongly linked as they have grown in maturity and responsibility in the health system across Zanzibar.

AKU alumni are to be found actively engaged in the Nursing Council, the Ministry and Mnazi Mmoja teaching hospital, as well as primary and secondary healthcare facilities across Zanzibar: all making a difference and still pulling each other up. The collaboration we saw from these alumni when

they were students has extended into their day-to-day work. Some were involved in the review of the Zanzibar Nursing and Midwifery Act, some are teaching new nurses, while others have gone on to pursue a master's degree in public health or other disciplines that contribute to the health sector.

It has been incredibly rewarding to see where those early investments have led years later. The most senior decision-makers in many of our institutions here in Zanzibar are AKU alumni – nurses and midwives who raise the bar and make a difference each and every day. That is probably the greatest testimony to our success.

Amina Abdulkadir Ali (MSc. RN, RM)  
**Inaugural Tutor, School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM), Associate Dean, School of Health and Medical Sciences (SHMS), State University of Zanzibar**



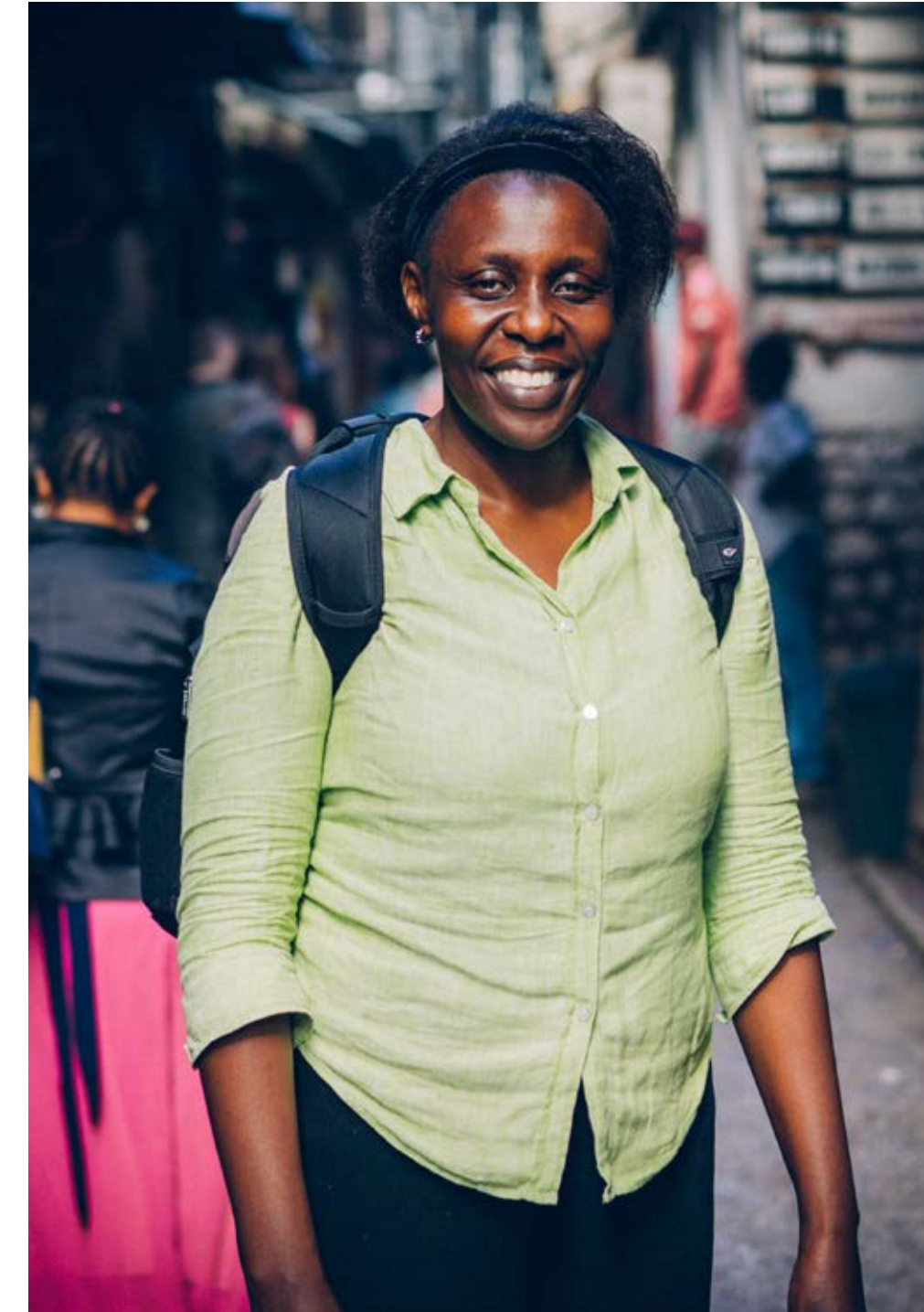
## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

As an interviewer for this project I experienced firsthand the depth and breadth of the impact we have on Zanzibari nurses and midwives through our various programmes. Our aim has always been to produce knowledgeable, competent graduates who can work independently, who are innovative leaders and confident and critical thinkers. We believe that this is our niche, and what sets our graduates apart.

Speaking with the alumni as we put these stories together, and hearing how they have used the skills that AKU built in them, has been incredibly rewarding. As a faculty member delivering the relevant-to-context curriculum, this feedback is both insightful and informative. It means that our approach has been worthwhile and we are making the difference we have always sought to make.

In the development of this publication we learnt what we have done well as we seek to strengthen evidence-based practice in Zanzibar, and we also discovered where we need to grow. This feedback is crucial for bolstering our programmes, content, teaching and curriculum design, and it will duly strengthen our pedagogies and future courses. I want to extend my gratitude to our alumni and to the SONAM team for bringing these stories, and our impact, to life.

Eunice Siaty-Pallangyo (RN, PhD)  
**Inaugural Tutor and Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery – Tanzania**





# INTRODUCTION

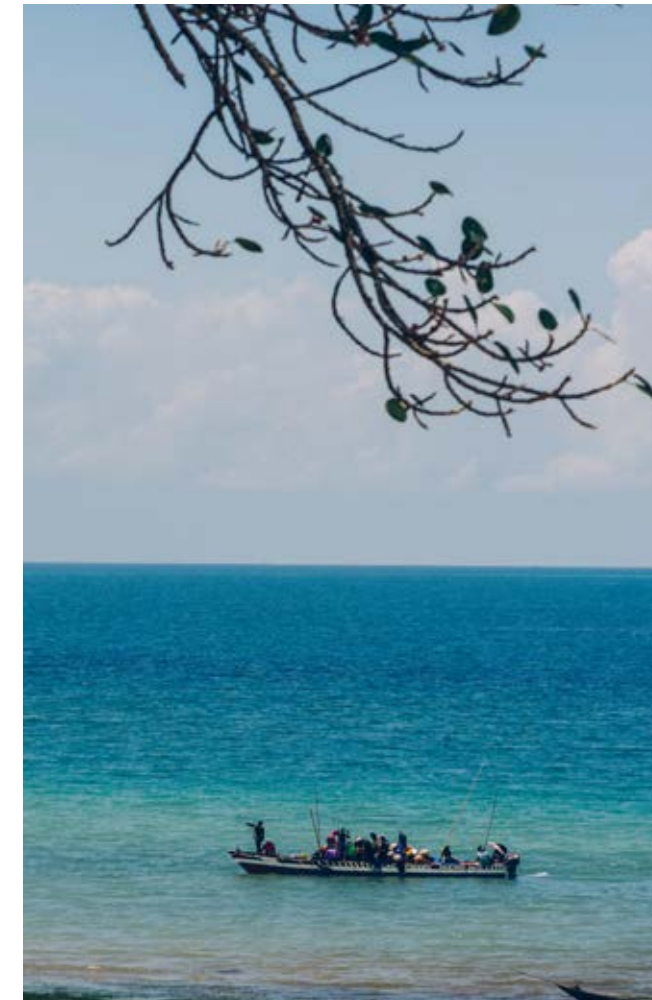
## HEALTH IN ZANZIBAR

The islands that make up Zanzibar evoke notions of history and deep-rooted culture, across the backdrop of a vibrant economy of spices, tourism and fishing. With a population of 1.3 million people, this semi-autonomous region of Tanzania is made up of the large islands of Unguja and Pemba and several smaller islands.

For thousands of years, the people of Zanzibar have maintained a resilient culture that still dominates and defines everyday life. Family units are strong, and form the basis of the community structures that provide the backbone of involved civic engagement.

Zanzibaris are served by more than 200 health facilities providing primary, primary-plus, secondary and tertiary healthcare. Located in northern Unguja, Mnazi Mmoja Referral Hospital is the only tertiary-level institution that provides full referral facilities and comprehensive surgical care. Nursing resources are governed by the Zanzibar Nurses and Midwives Council, an independent body dedicated to the welfare of the members of the profession and to advancing nursing and midwifery as essential and professional services on the islands.

While strongly networked, the health system still endeavours to provide tertiary-level care. Less than 10% of facilities currently



offer emergency obstetric and neonatal care. Against this backdrop, the role that each individual plays in the delivery of healthcare becomes even more critical.

At the forefront of those delivering care are nurses and midwives. These are the individuals who engage with patients by their bedsides, provide a first port of call in the community, and advocate for changes to health standards and regulations in response to the needs they see each day.

For more than 13 years the Aga Khan University School of Nursing and Midwifery has been working with these individuals, helping build the necessary skills for the nurses and midwives of Zanzibar to transform the landscape of health. These are their stories.



# OUR ALUMNI



# FATMA HASSAN SALEH

THE TIRELESS CARER.



## THE TIRELESS CARER.

As the Assistant In-Charge of the Children's Department at Mnazi Mmoja Referral Hospital, Fatma Hassan Saleh spends most of her days attending to the needs of patients who can barely express themselves. Navigating the health needs of her wards, who are between the ages of six and 12, is no easy feat. Half of her job is clinical while the other half is psychological – tending to the fears of both children and their parents as they find themselves in the hospital ward.

"Sometimes the ward is full of underfed children. We've even had cases of a 21-day-old infant coming with severe malnutrition." Many mothers on the island still give birth at home and miss out on the care and guidance offered at health facilities. Thus Fatma often finds herself treating conditions that could have otherwise been easily avoided.

One of the things that has helped her enhance treatment options and build positive outcomes is the Social Health course she took at the Aga Khan University. While studying for her diploma the connection between society and health became clearer, and she uses this knowledge to work with her patients as they transition from the hospital ward back into society.

Another aspect was the new interactions she developed with the doctors she works with. The management units she took provided new views on ethical responsibility toward patients. This broke down mental barriers that she had in place regarding doctor-nurse relationships. "I know I can take care of a patient and then brief the doctor when he comes in. The old way of only receiving orders from doctors has changed. Now we consult over a case and then agree on a resolution like colleagues."

Fatma hopes to influence young student nurses with this thinking early on in their careers. "I want to change the mindset of those working under me. Ideally all of them will acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and use that knowledge to improve their overall performance."

While nursing had not been Fatma's first choice when she left high school, she now knows it is exactly where she should be. "Nursing is in my blood. I can work from early morning to late in the evening. So long as the patients need care, I will be here to provide it."

For the children of Zanzibar and the students under her care, Fatma remains a beacon of light and of hope for the future.



**"I KNOW I CAN TAKE CARE OF A PATIENT AND THEN BRIEF THE DOCTOR WHEN HE COMES IN. THE OLD WAY OF ONLY RECEIVING ORDERS FROM DOCTORS HAS CHANGED. NOW WE CONSULT OVER A CASE AND THEN AGREE ON A RESOLUTION LIKE COLLEAGUES."**





# SULTAN KHAMIS MUKI

LEARNER, TEACHER,  
PRACTITIONER.



## LEARNER, TEACHER, PRACTITIONER.

When Sultan Khamis Muki joined the Aga Khan University's Bachelor of Science programme in 2008, he did not know that it was going to be a decision that transformed his life. He had initially applied for a diploma, but a stroke of luck found him transitioning to the degree programme. Sultan had always been hungry for professional growth, so the opportunity to move into a higher-level course was welcome. "I didn't want to be in a cadre that wouldn't allow me growth, so when I learnt that one can go up to master's level after their degree, I decided to do my level best in the programme and succeed."

Upon graduation, his excellent academic record put him on a new track. He was invited to become a nursing tutor at the College Authority. For Sultan, it was ideal – it was a path toward his dream of pursuing more knowledge – and he eagerly took up the position. Before long he was back to studies. This time it was at the University of Dodoma, where he chose to focus on courses in mental health. It was yet another fortuitous decision.

After his second graduation he returned to the college and taught several courses, including a unit in mental health, where he raised the pass rate from less than 50% to almost 100%. "What I took away from AKU was the teaching style of lecturers. Each lecturer was concerned about all aspects of the student. But at the same time the lecturers were very hard on us; they pushed us constantly to use reasoning and to think critically about the challenges we were trying to solve."

Adopting the same approach has been a pivotal aspect of Sultan's teaching style. He doesn't treat his students like passive recipients, but rather he pushes them in the same way he was propelled toward excellence. "We were taught to be strong and courageous. To not just

say yes to everything, but to ask questions." The approach also means that his students can be assured of fairness in their assessments, that their results reflect effort and not the favouritism that has become common in many tertiary institutions.

From his perspective, all the AKU students he learnt with have this somewhat special DNA, but the boldness of alumni is not always appreciated in the deeply hierarchical health system. "We tend to challenge things and always ask what the outcome would be if we did things in a different way. But not all supervisors appreciate such questions, and some of my fellow alumni have been branded as too confrontational."

"I appreciate the intellectual capacity-building I received at AKU. I got a strong foundation, an understanding of research and the benefits of being rigorous and working hard." When Sultan began his journey into academia, he didn't know that one day he would not only need to share the knowledge he gained, but also use the delivery methods that shaped his learning. He looks back on the growth that he sought with pride, knowing that his efforts will have a ripple effect through the students he so ably stewards.

**"I APPRECIATE THE INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY-BUILDING I RECEIVED AT AKU. I GOT A STRONG FOUNDATION, AN UNDERSTANDING OF RESEARCH AND THE BENEFITS OF BEING RIGOROUS AND WORKING HARD."**







**HIDAYA  
HAJI  
SHEHE**  
LEARNING BY DOING.



## LEARNING BY DOING.

Hidaya Haji Shehe traverses the maternity wards with confidence. Her comfort in this domain is born from years of working with patients as they transition to motherhood. Hidaya started practicing as a nurse in 1994 and went through an upgrading course in 2009. As a nurse with several years of practice under her belt, her time at the Aga Khan University surprisingly challenged her in new and unexpected ways.

A field visit to the Aga Khan University Hospital in Dar es Salaam was instrumental in opening up new perspectives for Hidaya. “The nurses we met there were confident, work-oriented and innovative. Nurses could direct patients to different doctors.” Though a seemingly straightforward idea, it was groundbreaking for Hidaya, who worked in a small facility with a limited number of doctors. The practice in her facility was that patients would see whoever was available. Choice had never been considered an option. But after her diploma, Hidaya introduced the idea and soon patients were able to decide which health workers they wanted to interact with. It encouraged a higher level of service delivery amongst the health workers and allowed patients to choose providers they were most comfortable with.

“Patients are more likely to come in earlier with their problems. I have found that if a patient knows me and is comfortable with me then they will come in and ask for me, even if it’s for an ailment they think is minor. If I cannot handle the problem then I will refer them to the right doctor. Before, they would choose not to see any provider and delay treatment, sometimes with fatal consequences.”

The tenets of patient and health worker rights were implanted in Hidaya while she was studying and are part of a credo that she continues to capitalise on almost a decade later.

A second key takeaway was that every experience is a learning moment. While attending to a mother who was facing a complicated pregnancy, she realised that she needed to chart the mother’s progress from the point she met her – five months into her pregnancy. During her diploma studies, she came to understand the value of scholarly research and that as a midwife, documenting each complicated case ultimately provides knowledge to the field. Throughout the pregnancy she kept detailed records of the case with the intent of publishing a paper. This outlook would not have occurred to her before, as operational research and ongoing research practice was a direct result of her time at AKU.

“We were taught about scholarly writing at AKU, and I remember one of my colleagues one day presenting a case of a mother who had a premature baby. So now when I have an interesting clinical case I just write the entire patient history. One day it will be me presenting a difficult case.”

From student to practitioner, Hidaya is committed to turning her daily learnings into an accelerator for widespread patient healing.

**“WE WERE TAUGHT ABOUT SCHOLARLY WRITING AT AKU, AND I REMEMBER ONE OF MY COLLEAGUES ONE DAY PRESENTING A CASE OF A MOTHER WHO HAD A PREMATURE BABY. SO NOW WHEN I HAVE AN INTERESTING CASE I JUST WRITE THE ENTIRE PATIENT HISTORY. ONE DAY IT WILL BE ME PRESENTING A DIFFICULT CASE.”**



2015  
MONTHLY SURVEY MATERNITY REPORT

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	TOTAL	AVERAGE
TOTAL ADMISSION	309	310	413	318	434	444	353	299	302	265	354	291	4241	508.92
TOTAL DELIVERY	311	355	344	411	341	356	280	283	280	316	296	296	3947	473.64
NORMAL DELIVERY	284	314	359	322	315	325	249	260	241	244	263	263	3587	430.14
MATERNAL DEATH	1	1	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	2	15	1.8
C/S	21	37	32	19	36	19	34	31	23	33	37	13	351	42.77
APH	2	6	3	6	11	1	5	2	2	1	4	2	45	5.4
PPH	1	7	6	5	7	4	6	3	8	2	10	2	61	7.32
ABNORMAL PRESENTATION	4	2	5	6	4	5	5	3	9	7	3	4	57	6.84
ECLAMPSIA	5	4	2	1	8	1	5	1	1	3	2	2	35	4.27
MULTIPLE DELIVERY	10	3	6	9	3	5	11	6	4	3	7	6	73	8.76
HOME DELIVERY	2	2	3	1	6	2	5	0	0	0	0	11	23	2.75
VACUUM DELIVERY	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.24
BBA	0	1	2	4	4	4	0	0	6	2	3	1	27	3.24
SBF	2	6	7	13	10	6	2	3	4	4	7	5	69	8.28
SBM	4	16	9	7	4	9	6	3	4	5	2	8	77	9.24
R.PLACENTA	4	4	1	1	4	2	4	4	4	4	2	3	37	4.44
TUBAL LIGATION	1	1	2	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	2	2	18	2.16
NOT DELIVERD	48	39	28	21	23	47	27	17	19	15	21	6	294	35.25





**JOKHA  
OMAR  
MSUO**  
NURSE, MOTHER.



## NURSE, MOTHER.

Jokha Omar Msuo's nursing career is intricately intertwined with motherhood. She grew up watching her mother head out to work each day as a nurse. This instilled a sense of pride in her, knowing the difference her parent was making in people's lives. At some point in her childhood she found herself imitating this nurturing and caring role. Whenever a person would get sick in her family or within her neighborhood Jokha was often the one tending to them. "Whenever there was someone sick around, I became the one to take care of them." It was something she loved to do, and it established her career path early in life.

After years as an enrolled nurse, Jokha joined the Aga Khan University diploma programme in 2009. Eager to upgrade her skills, she qualified for a scholarship from Johnson & Johnson and dived into her coursework.

However, soon after enrolling Jokha found out she was pregnant. She knew pregnancy was a woman's decision, and reproductive health rights was something she was learning about, yet female students had already been advised to avoid getting pregnant while studying. Knowing full well that it was only a matter of time before her situation became apparent to all, she decided to let the faculty know, but not before she had successfully completed her Reproductive Health unit. The experience brought to the fore the reality of the challenges women face in making decisions about their families and their careers.

Today, Jokha serves as an Assistant In-Charge of the obstetrics clinic at Mnazi Mmoja Referral Hospital. In her role she guides both doctors and nurses on the importance of teamwork and collaboration. "We need a spirit of teamwork if we want to succeed." Over the years she has witnessed the value of closer collaboration that is respectful of, but not bound by, hierarchy. It hasn't always been easy, but over the course of Jokha's career she has progressed to supervise those

who used to be her supervisors. She remains attuned to professional sensitivities even as she seeks practical and collaborative solutions.

Reflecting on her own growth and future, Jokha looks forward to pursuing her master's degree once her children have completed their education. "I know I can't juggle their schooling and my work, and also focus on my own studies, so there has to be a sacrifice." For now the choice is simple for this nurse and mother: "School will come later. For now I want to focus on helping the many mothers who need my help each day."

**"I KNOW I CAN'T JUGGLE THEIR SCHOOLING AND MY WORK, AND ALSO FOCUS ON MY OWN STUDIES, SO THERE HAS TO BE A SACRIFICE... SCHOOL WILL COME LATER. FOR NOW I WANT TO FOCUS ON HELPING THE MANY MOTHERS WHO NEED MY HELP EACH DAY."**





SMZ  
KITVO CHA AFYA  
MPENDAE

SMZ  
LA SPINAZI NA KITVO  
AFYA CHA AFYA  
KITVO CHA AFYA  
MPENDAE  
MOBILE ULTRASOUND  
SERVICES UNGUJA  
PHONE: 05-87-2000

TOYOTA

TAXI  
CARRY UP TO  
PASSENGERS

MINISTRY OF HEALTH TANZANIA  
MOBILE ULTRASOUND  
SERVICES UNGUJA

# MARYAM RASHID SULEIMAN

PATIENT ADVOCATE.



## PATIENT ADVOCATE.

Maryam Rashid Suleiman is guided by a singular goal each day – to fight for the rights of patients. Working as an Assistant Nursing Officer in Mnazi Mmoja Referral Hospital's surgical ward, she understands the challenges that some poor patients face. Many are brought in, then abandoned by family members who are unable to cope with the cost of medical treatment, meaning they often do not have a relative or friend watching out for their needs. At Mnazi Mmoja, these patients have someone in their corner. "I stand for patients to make sure they receive the quality care that is their right regardless of whether they have someone looking out for them or not."

Patient care is an integral part of a nurse's job, and to Maryam, the very centre of her work. She shares how she discovered an uncommonly high mortality rate amongst unconscious patients in a previous position. On investigation, it became apparent that the patients had not been receiving sufficient food, as nurses were unsure of how to use a feeding tube. Maryam had learned this simple but critical procedure during her diploma studies and was shocked to find out how many accredited nurses couldn't perform the task. She set about sharing the practical teaching that she had received, and in a short period, no unconscious patient in the facility would be found without the life-saving device.

In many ways, Maryam regards nursing as a calling, grounded in common sense driven by a caring attitude. It's what attracted her to the profession in the first place – the ability to provide help to her family, then community, in a manner that was professional and practical. In her role, she sees that as a missing element in a lot of young nurses. "Because of job scarcity you will see a lot of young people getting into nursing. Not because they love it, but because it provides economic security."

Whether or not nurses land in her ward because they love the work or because it pays the bills, Maryam treats them the same. She admits that she is stern and brooks no nonsense, but with overflowing wards to keep in check she understands it's the only way that her nursing team will be able to stay on track and meet their obligations. Those responsibilities include washing and feeding patients, in addition to attending to their medical needs. "There are no dirty patients in my ward. How can we be stitching wounds when we first have not helped a patient by getting them clean?" For her, seniority of the staffer is not what is important, but rather their ability to get the job done in a way that brings comfort to the patients they serve. With her outlook focused sharply on all those in her care, Maryam Rashid Suleiman is in her patients' corner.



**"THERE ARE NO DIRTY PATIENTS IN MY WARD. HOW CAN WE BE STITCHING WOUNDS WHEN WE FIRST HAVE NOT HELPED A PATIENT BY GETTING THEM CLEAN?"**







**RAMLA  
VUAI  
KHAMIS**  
POSITIVE AND PREPARED.



## POSITIVE AND PREPARED.

Ramla Vuai Khamis is a scrub nurse at Mnazi Mmoja – the largest and main referral hospital in Zanzibar. Her calm demeanour is well-suited for her work, where organisation and preparedness are critical factors of success.

Each day Ramla prepares for her duties by going through detailed checklists to ensure that surgical tools and patient lists are ready for the surgeons she works with. Knowing the complications that can arise from accepting a patient whose medication has not been recorded or whose management orders are incomplete, she has grown the confidence to postpone surgery if there is any anomaly she feels would put a patient's life at risk.

Confidence was a soft skill that was a direct result of her diploma in nursing. Understanding the principles of nursing ethics and patients' rights was the foundation that allowed her to later be comfortable with delaying a surgery that does not meet the standard of preparation she expects. "The education I received gave me confidence to perform my role in new ways. Having the right knowledge and skills has given me courage."

Beyond the theatre, Ramla spends time conducting outreach activities in schools around Mnazi Mmoja. While she is incredibly energised by her surgical support work, helping people avoid surgery altogether is more meaningful. "This is how we build community benefits. By establishing specific times to visit schools where we conduct health education talks on ear care."

Currently her time is fully occupied, but Ramla looks forward to returning to her scholarly pursuits one day for a bachelor's degree. "Education has contributed to a change in my performance, and has helped me provide better care to my patients. If I can improve my skills and apply lessons, it's a win for both me and my patients."

**"THE EDUCATION I RECEIVED GAVE ME CONFIDENCE TO PERFORM MY ROLE IN NEW WAYS. HAVING THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS HAS GIVEN ME COURAGE."**





# WANU BAKARI KHAMIS

TEACHER, MATRON,  
RESEARCHER.



## TEACHER, MATRON, RESEARCHER.

Wanu Bakari Khamis graduated with a nursing degree from the Aga Khan University in 2008 and was so inspired by what her education exposed her to that she enrolled shortly thereafter for a master's degree in public health.

One thing stands out for Wanu from her AKU experience – the power of the reflective journals that students were encouraged to keep. The journals formed the bedrock for building strong writing skills, as students had to observe, internalize and reflect each day on the learnings of the programme. The process was pivotal in learning and retaining knowledge, and she talks often to those she mentors about the importance of writing. “I always tell people – if there is one thing from AKU that I learned and I am proud of, it is the writing skills.”

When she joined her course, Wanu had been part of a team working on a new Nursing and Midwifery Act for Zanzibar. Although it took almost seven years to complete, she feels that it wouldn't have been possible without the strong focus on writing and evidence-based research she found in her nursing programme.

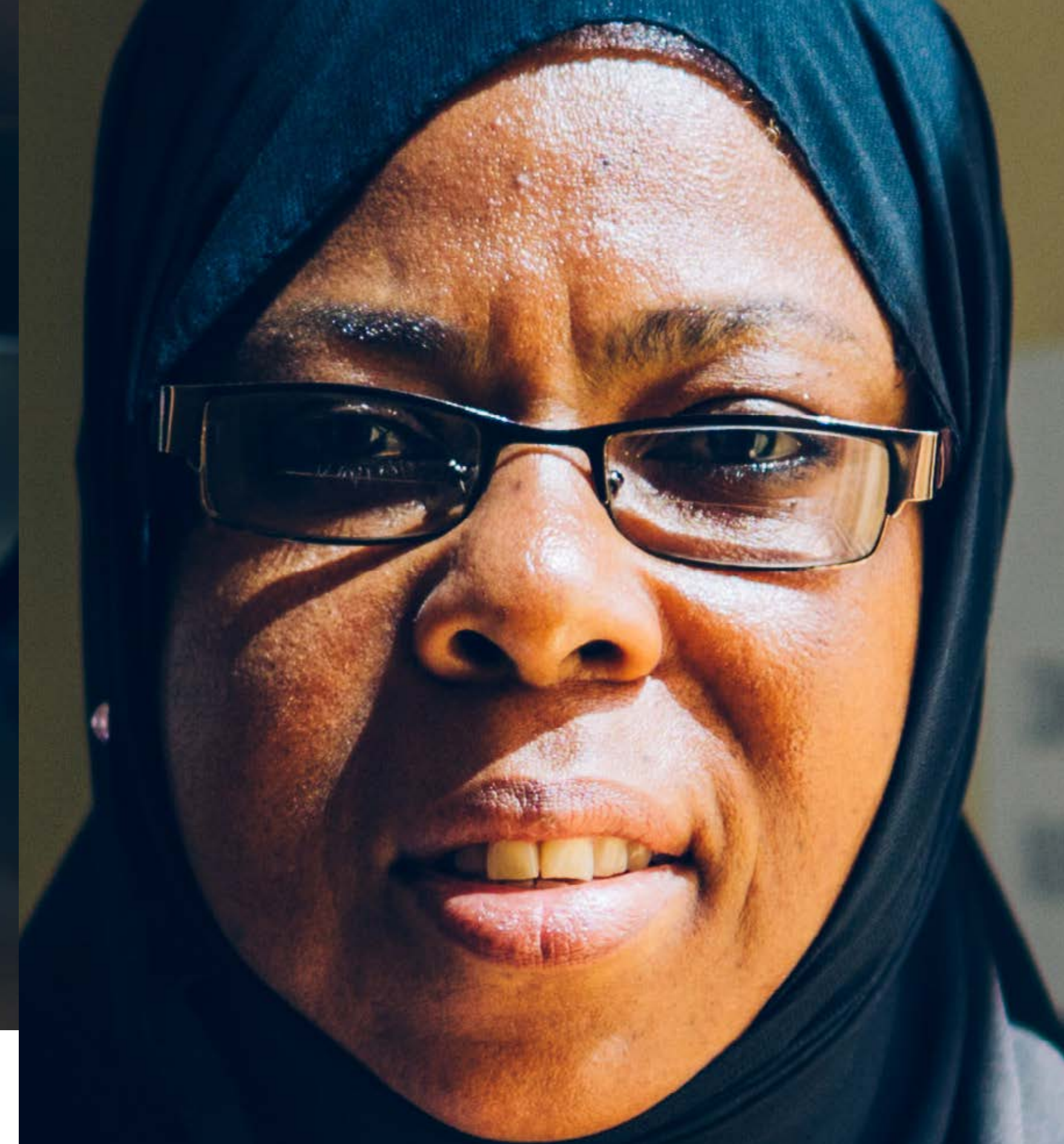
“We had an obsolete nursing act that badly needed updating. I made sure we went through a detailed and proper process of collecting views, researching, conducting stakeholder engagement, learning from others and drafting, until finally a new act was complete. It took almost seven years, but it was worth it as the Nursing and Midwifery Act is in use for the whole of Zanzibar today.”

After graduation, Wanu's skills were in demand on various fronts. She began by teaching health promotion and health education courses for environmental health students at the State University of Zanzibar and later supported a number of tertiary institutions as an external examiner, a role that she still retains. Then there is her day job as Zanzibar's National Coordinator for Maternal and Child Health Services, which she has held since 2016.

In her current role she oversees the island's rollout of reproductive health, family planning and youth-friendly services. It's a position that is demanding but rewarding as Wanu has a direct influence on mothers, young wives and their children across Zanzibar's islands. From her view, impact takes place in the community, so she chooses to take her work directly to them. Wanu is constantly seeking new ways to extend her influence and has partnered with the Zanzibar Nurses Association and NGOs in order to broaden the reach of her work.

“If we want to build this nation, it's necessary that we give back however we can. That's why I work with the government, with students, with NGOs and with clinics. Partnerships are so necessary if we want to have positive outcomes that impact thousands.” For this energetic practitioner who is driven by evidence, there are still new opportunities to make a difference in the many lives she serves.

**“IF WE WANT TO BUILD THIS NATION, IT'S NECESSARY THAT WE GIVE BACK HOWEVER WE CAN. THAT'S WHY I WORK WITH THE GOVERNMENT, WITH STUDENTS, WITH NGOS AND WITH CLINICS. PARTNERSHIPS ARE SO NECESSARY IF WE WANT TO HAVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES THAT IMPACT THOUSANDS.”**





**HOSPITALI YA MNAZI MNOJA  
ZANZIBAR**  
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A group of approximately seven women wearing black hijabs and traditional dresses are walking from left to right across the paved area in front of the building.

A group of people, including several women in colorful headscarves and a child, are gathered near the base of the building's wall.

A man in a light blue and white striped shirt is walking towards the camera while pushing a bicycle. In the background, several other people are standing near the arched entrance of the hospital.

A man wearing a light-colored short-sleeved shirt and bright blue trousers is standing with his back to the camera, looking towards the entrance of the building.

# SAID MUSSA ALI

FROM PASSIVE TO  
PROACTIVE.





## FROM PASSIVE TO PROACTIVE.

Said Mussa Ali's warm voice and heartfelt laughter are his signature. His empathetic demeanour draws in his patients, both young and old, as they engage with his kindly eyes. As he walks through his new posting at the Primary Health Care Unit (PHCU) facility interacting with patients, one can see he is at ease.

His path into nursing can be traced back to the circumstances of the village he grew up in, which left a profound imprint on him. "There was such a shortage of healthcare providers in the village I come from, so much so, that the gap challenged me to join the profession."

Said underwent his diploma training with the Aga Khan University in 2012. Shortly thereafter, he was deployed to a health facility at Kojani PHCU+ on Pemba Island, where his approach to his duties changed dramatically. The island has a sizeable facility yet very few patients were using it. With his newfound view on community engagement, Said decided to seek out patients instead of waiting for them to come to the facility.

"As colleagues we started to ask ourselves what we can do differently." The outreach programme soon resulted in the formation of a health committee and regular visits to all villages. Mosques in the area became the first port of call as the team traversed the island. Several houses of faith hosted the village meetings, lending credibility to the health team and their message.

"We started sensitising mothers about the advantages of coming to deliver in the health facility, as well as the dangers of home delivery." One of the enticements that the team used to increase uptake was free

birth certificates. By law, babies delivered in a facility receive a free birth certificate, while those delivered at home have to pay for one on registration. Advertising the simple provision was a huge incentive to parents, and the number of facility-based births shot up dramatically.

"Patient numbers increased tenfold. But what makes me happy is that even after I left that facility, the positive numbers have been maintained. The critical thinking approach really made a difference."

Said reflects on his time as a nurse in the context of his new position as the senior health worker of a small rural facility. "I am the In-Charge, so all the responsibilities of the facility fall to me. If the General Nurse, who is my assistant, is not around, I will provide the vaccinations. If those whom I supervise are responsible for generating a report, I have to make sure they accomplish that."

For Said, hierarchy doesn't absolve him from action. Instead he chooses to lead actively, rolling up his sleeves to set an example and make sure that the needs of patients are met. He's proactively leading from the front, in ways both big and small.



**"WE STARTED SENSITISING MOTHERS ABOUT THE ADVANTAGES OF COMING TO DELIVER IN THE HEALTH FACILITY, AS WELL AS THE DANGERS OF HOME DELIVERY."**



# SHARIF HAJI SHEHE

BONDED FOR LIFE.



## BONDED FOR LIFE.

The warm yellow colours and ornately coloured door welcome people to the Kivunge Cottage Hospital where Sharif Haji Shehe works as the In-Charge at the Care and Treatment Centre (CTC). The facility is on the northern end of Unguja Island and is a referral unit supporting several health centres in the area. Many of the referrals are for HIV and AIDS treatment, and the patients are directed to the CTC Sharif supervises. "When the patients arrive we register them. We know that they have psychosocial needs as well as clinical ones, so our work also involves patient and community engagement to address those needs."

Since he graduated with his nursing diploma in 2008 Sharif has witnessed the change in treatment protocols for HIV and AIDS. "Yes; we give out drugs, but our most important role is as counsellors so that we can help patients adhere to the tough drug regimen." Sharif shares the changes he has seen over the past decade: "Many patients used to arrive here in a very bad condition, but they have now gotten relief. People have learnt about our CTC and our numbers are now increasing because of the services we provide."

Sharif was particularly keen on the mental health courses in his diploma programme. Little did he know that mental health would become such a pivotal part of his daily work as a nurse-counsellor. Dealing with mental health challenges has become a vital part of his work and an area that he enjoys serving in. "I felt drawn to those who have been abandoned by society, so I found myself in this work, and I have decided to remain committed to it."

Commitment was forged in an interesting way for Sharif. While studying for his diploma he was assigned to a new facility, and it thrust him and his team into disarray. He had no option but to find a way to make the transfer work, even though he was still studying. It required a fair amount of juggling as he integrated into his new duty station, with new colleagues and assignments. Overall, it was a test of his commitment to his work and studies, and he worked hard to ensure that he met his all-round obligations. He credits his fellow students as a big part of that success. "There were only 20 of us, so we got to know each other and each other's issues. We shared burdens and opportunities, and they really supported me during my transition."

The bonds from his days as a student at AKU continue to thrive. "We were pioneers as students in distance education, and many of us are keen to further our education after AKU. If we are asked to be pioneers of a new programme at the master's level, we will be ready."

**"WE WERE PIONEERS AS STUDENTS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION, AND MANY OF US ARE KEEN TO FURTHER OUR EDUCATION AFTER AKU. IF WE ARE ASKED TO BE PIONEERS OF A NEW PROGRAMME AT THE MASTER'S LEVEL, WE WILL BE READY."**





# TATU KHAMIS HUSSEIN

CARING FROM THE CORE.



## CARING FROM THE CORE.

Tatu Khamis Hussein's job is not an easy one. She is the In-Charge for an oncology unit, and while the unit is new and provides only outpatient treatment, it has a steadily growing number of patients. The team is now building a ward for patients so they can be provided more nuanced, round-the-clock care. "Even though we don't admit, I tell our patients to come in if they are in severe pain and not wait until the oncology day." Empathy is Tatu's hallmark; she hates to see people suffering. In fact, this trait is what drew her into nursing. "I chose this profession from my heart, and that is what has always guided me." Nursing is one of few professions that requires one-on-one interactions with different people daily, and it can be difficult for those who do not have the forbearance or skill to deal with the challenges of several ailing patients. Tatu's confidence, however, is recognizable, and much of her pride rests in the education she received at the Aga Khan University.

Tatu shares an experience when a mother came into the children's ward with her sick child. The mother expressed joy at seeing her, sharing that she was sure her child was in safe hands because Tatu had provided stellar care for the child before. "When you help patients with a clean heart, they will never forget you." Even though Tatu didn't recall the patient, she was pleased that her service stood out. Caring service is what she wants to be remembered for. "One provides service with a positive attitude. Even if there are no medical options to give, sharing information and listening helps patients. One's rewards come from these small, positive acts."

Having served in a pediatric ward, Tatu ponders upon the irony of life. "I have four children, but I have never slept with any of them in a hospital. I'm thankful to God that he protects my children as I care for the children of others." Her service is propelled in large part by her faith, and the patients that she interacts with benefit from the warmth that stems from her as a result.

While Tatu is more than three decades into her nursing journey, she is still pondering the next steps she sees for herself – to further her studies if possible, but most important to promote a culture of caring, teamwork, integrity and excellence amongst the nurses that she supervises. "My motto is simple – we have to remember a few things to do this job the way we are supposed to: the rights of the patients, hygiene, safety and humility." Driven by her caring attitude, Tatu will no doubt continue to lead her team toward excellence each day.





TATUKH HUSSEIN  
Dac NURSE



# MOHAMMED ALI SALIM

BUILDING FOR LEGACY.



## BUILDING FOR LEGACY.

Confidence could be Mohammed Ali Salim's middle name. He wholly embraces his role as the Chief Nursing Officer for Wete Health Facility on Pemba Island. His self-assurance is born out of a practice of delivering quality care and doing so with an attitude that more than gets the job done.

At the time of his graduation in 2011, Mohammed was the second nurse to attain a degree in Pemba. A problem-based learning approach was an integral part of his degree programme, which also had a component of academic writing.

"I undertook a project while still at school and though relatively small, it really built my writing skills, and in time my competency was recognised. By the time I went back to work, it was evident that my skills were different from what my colleagues attained in other colleges."

Mohammed credits his writing skills to the nursing degree programme and shares one experience where these skills proved transformative. As a public servant, he knew that public resources would always be insufficient to meet all the needs of a community. While posted in Micheweni, he decided to spearhead a laboratory construction project. He mobilised stakeholders to put together the project needs. The team spent sleepless nights coming up with a suitable design, and once it was complete Mohammed took the lead in drafting a proposal that was submitted to the CDC.

The CDC provided the resources, and soon it was on to the next stage – constructing the building and equipping the lab. The project emboldened him and his approach to overcoming problems. "Being a manager doesn't mean that people will engage you. You have to be

proactive in your work." Mohammed found himself being pulled into several initiatives due to his proactive nature. He embodies the reality of success breeding increased demand.

In addition to his fulltime role, Mohammed serves as Patron of Micheweni Cottage Hospital. It is a locality in which he has spent a decade of his career and where he learnt the importance of respecting a community's culture. While others have found Micheweni a difficult location to adjust to, Mohammed has a different account. "They allow me in because I listen to them and I respect their way of living. I understand the context and later, once accepted, I bring to the table new ideas that could be impactful." This approach has seen the uptake of reproductive health services amongst men, as well as increased knowledge of prevention of mother-to-child disease transmission in the community.

With the exposure he gained while at AKU, Mohammed soon found himself teaching and mentoring other staff on how to effectively use modern equipment for diagnostic and monitoring purposes. "I will not be Chief Nursing Officer forever; it's just a position that I have today, and so my focus is the facilities that I work with. I want to see them performing well with no issues of infection, where standards are observed." With his energetic approach to his life and work, Mohammed is truly leaving a legacy that will be embraced for years to come.



**"THEY ALLOW ME IN BECAUSE I LISTEN TO THEM AND I RESPECT THEIR WAY OF LIVING."**





# RUKIA RAJAB BAKAR

SETTING NEW  
STANDARDS IN NURSING.



## SETTING NEW STANDARDS IN NURSING.

Rukia Rajab Bakar's entry into nursing was through her mother. She was encouraged by the career that she had seen her mother carve out for herself and was eager to follow in her footsteps. However, when she attended the three-month pretraining session that was mandatory for potential nursing students, what she saw made her change her mind. Three months of exposure to nursing duties in hospitals, health facilities and morgues turned her off. She didn't think it was the calling for her and switched to a course in environmental health. It didn't last long though; after a week Rukia returned to the nursing course, guided by the woman whose footsteps led her to nursing in the first place.

Rukia excelled in her chosen course, repeatedly clinching the position of top student during her initial nursing training. Her academic excellence was the reason she was invited back to the College of Health Sciences to become a nurse tutor after a few years of practice. When she started, she was teaching several subjects as well as serving as an Assistant Programme Coordinator. In 2005, she joined the Aga Khan University's conversion programme where she secured her degree in nursing.

Slowly but surely her path was being forged. After her degree, Rukia went on to pursue a master's in public health and then in 2014, enrolled for her PhD. "I think I will be the first nurse in Zanzibar to graduate with a PhD, and it excites me because I am pursuing it to help me teach others." In between her studies, more responsibility kept coming Rukia's way. She has served as Chief Academic Officer and now is the Principal of her alma mater, where she strives to ensure a high-quality experience for the students under her care. This entails seeking innovative ways to supplement the resources

the college receives from the Ministry; thinking creatively about staff retention and support; and developing a curriculum that reflects changing practices and needs. "While at AKU we did a lot of clinical practice, and that really helped us understand the procedures. With that experience, I insisted that we follow the same approach here. We also try to keep our classes small so we can provide quality supervision to all the students."

Rukia has developed research partnerships with various institutions, including some UN agencies. From her AKU experience, she knows how crucial research is to good practice, and she is unabashed in ensuring these rigorous standards are upheld at the College of Health Sciences. "Sometimes I will turn away students who want to carry out research if their proposal is not up to standard. It's important for students to understand how to excel, even if it's through a hard lesson."

Rukia often shares her own story with her students. While she is held in awe as the Principal, she is quick to remind them where her journey started. "Some refuse to believe that I started at certificate level. I know others want to reach this position I'm in, so they need to know where I started, and also what I have gone through." The initially reluctant nurse has truly shown that with hard work and commitment to excellence, there are no limits.

**"SOMETIMES I WILL TURN AWAY STUDENTS WHO WANT TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IF THEIR PROPOSAL IS NOT UP TO STANDARD. IT'S IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO EXCEL, EVEN IF IT'S THROUGH A HARD LESSON."**





# SEIF ALAWI

FROM CLASSROOM  
TO COMMUNITY.



## FROM CLASSROOM TO COMMUNITY.

Seif Alawi is constantly armed with a knowing smile that suggests strong opinions. With the support of Johnson & Johnson, Seif enrolled for the diploma programme and successfully graduated in 2010. Shortly after, he was appointed Patron of Chake Chake Hospital. "In this role I supervised the work of my team and oriented new members. Mentorship was one of the key elements of my work."

Although his work station was within the hospital, Seif wanted to promote health beyond the confines of the facility. He took an unusual step with one goal in mind – improving the wellness of communities. "We used to go to remote communities for health while at AKU. For example in Kibokoni, we evaluated the entire zone and identified a dumping site in a residential area." Research was an important part of his training and a skill that he has consistently put into action since graduating.

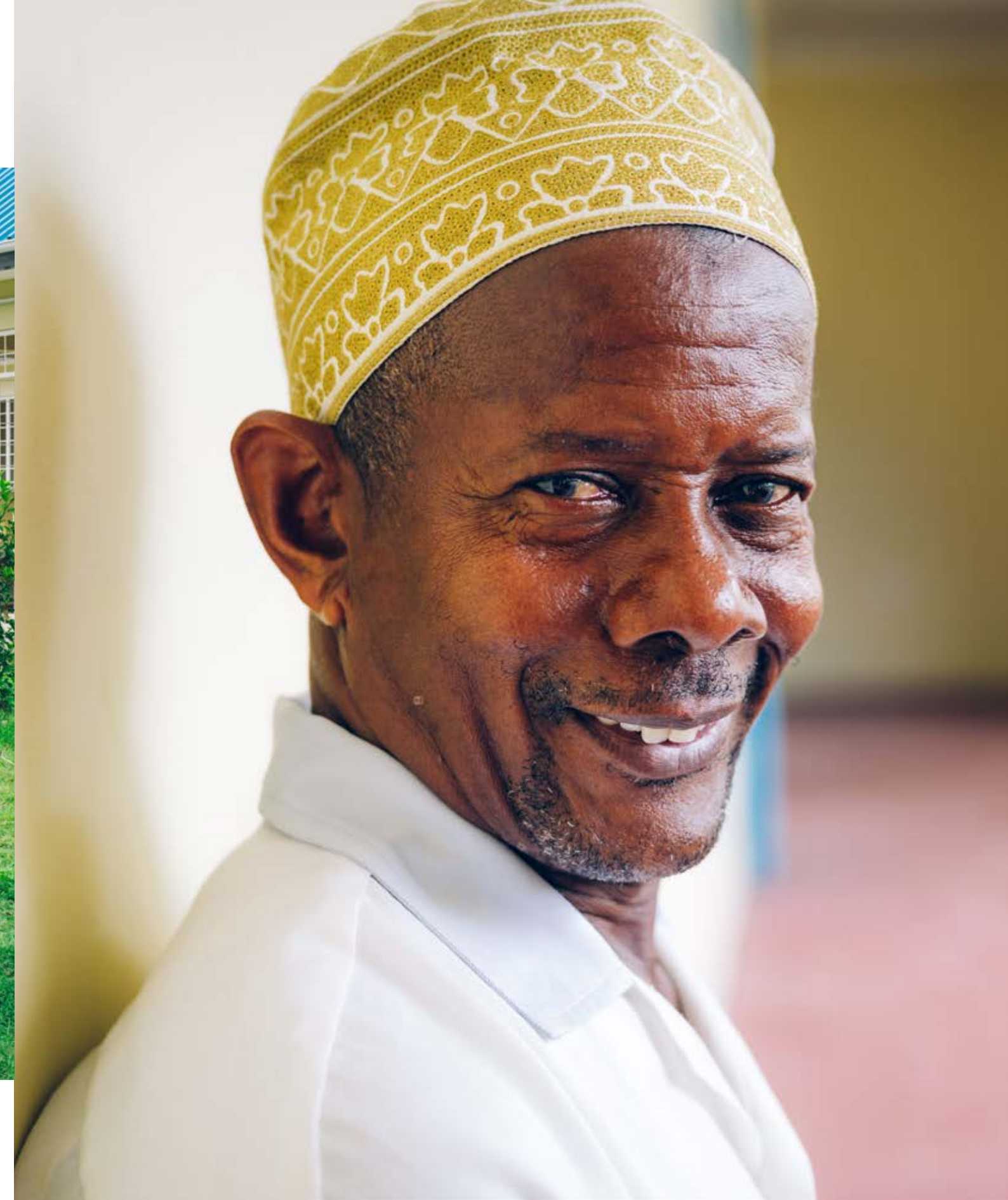
Seif's first interaction with Kibokoni was while undertaking field work as part of his course. Though the field practice ended, the needs of the community continued to stay top of mind for the erstwhile students. During an alumni meeting hosted by the University, an idea was hatched to return to Kibokoni and complete the service that had been started while at school.

"Health education has to be specifically targeted to the community. We mobilized the people and taught them how to protect themselves from outbreaks such as cholera and other diseases that come from open dumpsites. It was a decision I and my fellow alumni agreed on. When we met, it was evident that each one of us wanted to contribute to bettering our community's health."

Beyond clearing the dumpsite, the regular visits entailed much more. "We provided education to the community and helped them identify and address challenges like boiling water, toilet construction and the importance of eating a balanced diet."

When questioned about his next steps, Seif first goes into reflection mode. "One of the things I was so keen to learn was research. Even before we started learning I used to ask what research is. After I wrote my first research proposal I realised the power of the skill I had. This was the most meaningful part of my experience at university." This public health stalwart sees an opportunity to transform more communities using applied research and is ready to lead the charge.

**"IT WAS A DECISION I AND MY FELLOW ALUMNI AGREED ON. WHEN WE MET, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT EACH ONE OF US WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO BETTERING OUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH."**







JIWE HIL  
LIMEWEK  
MBIO Z  
ND GEOP  
TAREHE

# HAJI NYONJE PANDU

CHANGING THE FUTURE  
OF NURSING.



## CHANGING THE FUTURE OF NURSING.

When Haji Nyonje Pandu completed his secondary school education in 1986, his excellent performance in biology class stood out. His uncle, who was a nurse, recognised the value of his success and suggested he would make a good candidate for nursing. Haji had no objections, and his uncle took him under his wing and introduced him to the profession. His acceptance of his uncle's insight proved a wise decision as Haji has enjoyed more than 30 years of service as a nurse.

"I joined the AKU diploma programme in 2006, graduated in 2008, worked for a year, enrolled for the degree programme and graduated with my nursing degree in 2012." Armed with his new credentials Haji joined an orthopaedics unit, but after a year was restless for more. "If AKU had a master's programme, that's where I would have gone, because the teaching there was superior. But since there was none, I searched elsewhere and registered for master's degree in human resource management."

It was a prudent choice as in 2016, after a rigorous interview process, Haji was appointed to his position as Director of Nursing Services at Mnazi Mmoja, Zanzibar's largest referral hospital. "I have to credit the leadership courses I took while at AKU for building my capacity in staff and nursing management. That course is what led me to be selected as Patron, and then my master's degree opened up the world of public sector management. With that combination, I have a unique package to offer."

What excites Haji about his current role is the opportunity to push for increased respect for nurses. "Things have changed a lot from when I started. Some doctors would verbally abuse nurses, thinking that we were not a professional cadre. But armed with our new skills,

we are getting better recognition." The challenge Haji now faces is encouraging the right people into the profession. "These days a lot of young people study nursing for the wrong reasons. They really have no willingness to serve, so when they come to work, they do not perform well."

At Mnazi Mmoja Referral Hospital, Haji is already changing the status quo. He brought in strict performance management processes that resulted in a significant reduction of patient complaints, and introduced a bottom-up approach to budgeting that allows different ward teams to become part of the decision-making process. As a nurse who has risen through the ranks, he knows the challenges his colleagues face – from insufficient resources and equipment to congested wards. He's keen on using his decades of experience to reverse the tide.

Haji's efforts have already been recognised. "Recently the President mentioned the improved quality of service at this hospital, and I was recognised by name in that speech. A similar mention happened in the House of Representatives. I'm reassured that the reputation and role of nurses is now being recognised at the highest levels."

When asked about the future, Haji is clear – his role in the next few years is to keep building a strong foundation for young nurses, the kind that will ensure that they become great nursing professionals.



**"THINGS HAVE CHANGED A LOT FROM WHEN I STARTED. SOME DOCTORS WOULD VERBALLY ABUSE NURSES, THINKING THAT WE WERE NOT A PROFESSIONAL CADRE. BUT ARMED WITH OUR NEW SKILLS, WE ARE GETTING BETTER RECOGNITION."**





# ABDALLAH HASSAN

HIV WARRIOR.



## HIV WARRIOR.

The zabiba on Abdallah Hassan's forehead reveals an integral aspect of his nature – devotion and dedication to that which he holds dear. Since his graduation in 2011 from the nursing diploma programme he has worked concertedly at changing HIV and AIDS communication, control and service delivery on Pemba Island. Quiet yet forceful, he is a champion for change – in attitudes, approaches and action on this tiny island. He recalls one of the most important lessons the programme gave him. “I remember we went to a certain village and camped nearby while we undertook field work. I learnt how to conduct interviews with the community, get along with ordinary people and help solve their problems.”

Today, Abdallah is an Assistant Programme Manager with the Zanzibar AIDS Control Programme, an initiative of the Ministry of Health. In his role, he provides support, supervision and mentorship for a team of six coordinators on the island of Pemba and administrative support to NGOs and CBOs working in the field. While the role is one that requires both managerial and clinical skills, what Abdallah enjoys most is helping people solve problems.

Like many places, expectation and reliance on government intervention is the norm, but Abdallah's mantra is clear. “We are the government, just you and me; we can't be waiting for anyone else to come and solve our problems.” Cognisant of government bureaucracy and the limitations of its delivery and supply chains, he actively encourages health workers in the facilities he supervises to think about solutions to their problems, and he leads by example – whether it's getting on his hands and knees to clean wards, or moving from house to house to undertake screening of children. “We often have the solutions we seek inside ourselves or they might rest with others. It just takes collaboration to unlock the answer. I am learning to be a change agent, and not just collect a salary.”

Though Pemba has an HIV prevalence rate of 0.3%, the lowest amongst the islands that make up Zanzibar, Abdallah doesn't see that as a reason to rest on his laurels. “Pemba is an island with many fishermen, but also many businessmen, so we have a lot of migration. If we don't work carefully, our island remains at risk and may one day suffer. The general HIV prevalence is low, but in special groups it's as high as 25%.”

His main concern remains ensuring that those who don't know their HIV status have the means to find out in a way that is culturally sensitive and free of stigma. “We sometimes learn from others and what they are doing, but sometimes we should implement according to our own situation; let's take care of our problems, but according to our culture.”

Abdallah is constantly on the lookout for new methods to deliver sensitive messages about HIV prevention. “Let's not take things for granted; we need to deliver the message!” For him, the current low prevalence rate doesn't mean Pemba is not at risk. Each day, whether in the office with his staff planning their outreach activities across the different wards, or in the field engaging with and listening to community members, Abdallah is relentlessly at work against the virus.



**“WE SOMETIMES LEARN FROM OTHERS AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING, BUT SOMETIMES WE SHOULD IMPLEMENT ACCORDING TO OUR OWN SITUATION; LET'S TAKE CARE OF OUR PROBLEMS, BUT ACCORDING TO OUR CULTURE.”**





# PHILOMENA LWOGA

TENACITY IN PURSUIT.





## TENACITY IN PURSUIT.

Philomena Lwoga is a bundle of energy, intent on using every minute available in her day to her advantage. In 2017, she was appointed to the position of Hospital Secretary at Kivunge Cottage Hospital. "I'm still learning the expectations of my new position, and while I am excited about the change, I know it will be difficult for me to leave the practical work of nursing, which is in my blood."

Philomena is a midwife driven by her big heart. She received her diploma from the Aga Khan University in 2008 and proceeded to pursue a degree with the Open University. She views the inputs of her training as twofold – first, an opportunity to improve her own skills and second as a means to impact the work of others. "Through different leadership positions I have used my education to influence other healthcare providers." Philomena has started several training efforts in her workplace, diffusing her learnings to colleagues. "I use time on the job to train every chance I get. Sometimes it's an hour during the workday or sometimes on weekends. I have run sessions on eclampsia, nutrition and other areas that I feel our team needs."

As a midwife, Philomena is constantly exposed to difficult challenges that women and children face in her community. "I have been here a long time, so mothers will sometimes look for me at home when they have a problem, and I will attend to them or counsel them there. I am part of this community." She sees her position as one that is not confined to the walls of the facility she serves in. From this perspective she creatively considers solutions for the challenges patients face in her locality and the role that she and her team have in changing the status quo. "I noted a gap in nutrition in so many patients, and I started to question fellow nurses about their knowledge

on the subject. I found out that many had never received training in this area, so I set out to build a training programme – everything from teaching the value of porridge, to what vegetables to plant in gardens. It's not been easy finding the time, but we have to do it if we want to see a change in our patients."

By choice, Philomena's days are long. She finds it very difficult to switch off or not answer a call, whether it's from a patient or a fellow nurse. "I will be in at 5 a.m. and still be around at 8 p.m. Days can be lengthy, but you have to keep working. I am ready to do the work and don't mind getting tired. What's important is that I am fit, healthy and can serve."

Fortified by her dynamism and curious nature, Philomena will no doubt continue to be the problem-solver that will transform the lives of mothers and children in her community.



**"I HAVE BEEN HERE A LONG TIME, SO MOTHERS WILL SOMETIMES LOOK FOR ME AT HOME WHEN THEY HAVE A PROBLEM, AND I WILL ATTEND TO THEM OR COUNSEL THEM THERE. I AM PART OF THIS COMMUNITY."**



**KUTOKA**

**KUINCIA**



# RAJAB KHAMIS RAJAB

SUPERVISOR, SOLUTION  
PROVIDER.



## SUPERVISOR, SOLUTION PROVIDER.

As he sits in his office at the Zanzibar Nursing and Midwives Council, Rajab Khamis Rajab shares the experiences of the multiple jobs he holds. "At the Nursing and Midwives Council, I play a number of different roles. I am the Chief Nursing Officer, but as the registrar's office is in the same space and the two roles support each other, I also serve as the Chief Supervisor and an Assistant Registrar."

Being responsible for the supervision of all nurses in Zanzibar is a demanding yet rewarding job. "We need to be aware of all local and international policies in the field as well as new areas of practice." Rajab acts as an interlocutor between the Ministry of Health and the nurses he supervises. "The council is here to deal with standards, but also complaints about misconduct amongst nurses. So one day we are handling training and the next we are resolving disciplinary cases." Over his tenure, Rajab shares how communities appreciate the work of the council. "Now when complaints are raised at the facility, people know to come straight to the council. It shows that people appreciate our role and understand it too."

A fair amount of Rajab's time is spent travelling between the islands that make up Zanzibar. Supervision requires hands-on assessments, and his decades of experience working in health facilities have been especially useful for this senior role. "I can't be deceived by those I supervise. After all, I have done the work myself in the past. So I know what needs to be done, and more important, how it should be done."

One of the practices that has stayed with him almost a decade after his time at the Aga Khan University is that of health assessments. He remembers a teaching approach that he found surprisingly practical. Two students would undertake a thorough assessment of each other

before embarking on a generalised assessment. "After graduation I went back to my health centre and carried out a health assessment. Even though I did it again at degree level, I prefer the way I was taught at AKU; it was so practical."

No doubt the learnings proved foundational for Rajab as today he develops guidelines and teaching modules at the council. His first foray into teaching was in an earlier position where he developed training programmes for schools. "While I was engaged in the Zanzibar Research Programme I was exposed to a lot of schools, and I began to understand the various problems the students had."

Armed with that knowledge, Rajab took the time to work with teachers to identify how they could support students who had health problems. Training on first-aid management began in a number of schools, and before long, local businesses were supporting the school health programme through donated first-aid kits and training modules. "It's important to connect with people through education. People really appreciate learning new things. When they begin to see that their problems are getting solved their appreciation grows even more." No doubt this multilayered nurse will continue to raise the bar across the islands that he calls home.

**"NOW WHEN COMPLAINTS ARE RAISED AT THE FACILITY, PEOPLE KNOW TO COME STRAIGHT TO THE COUNCIL. IT SHOWS THAT PEOPLE APPRECIATE OUR ROLE AND UNDERSTAND IT TOO."**





# RUKIA BHALOO LADA

THE TECH-SAVVY  
MIDWIFE.



## THE TECH-SAVVY MIDWIFE.

After Rukia Bhaloo Lada graduated with her nursing diploma in 2008, she worked as a nurse midwife in one of Zanzibar's large hospitals for several years. The training she received from her diploma programme was instrumental in changing the way she subsequently interacted with junior nurses. "Frankly speaking, I was so much more confident. I found I was now comfortable supervising young nurses who had gained their certificate." The programme changed her outlook and built in her an ability to go beyond herself.

This confidence may have been the key to Rukia's next step in her nursing journey, as she was selected to train as a sonographer under a programme sponsored by the French government. Her time became divided between her duty station and outreach sites in rural areas of Zanzibar. "As a midwife I really enjoy conducting ultrasounds because I can intervene early in any problems I see for my patient. It allows me to take action, and I think I offer more than a person who is only a sonographer."

While the protocol for ultrasounds is normally three reviews in a pregnancy, many of Rukia's patients are unaware of their status in their first trimester. As such, most of the patients she attends to are already in the last 20 weeks of their pregnancy. "I have had an instance of a mother in her seventh month of pregnancy who was unaware she was carrying multiples. The ultrasound has helped because now we tell them not to wait until labour begins, but rather to come and deliver at the hospital to avoid complications."

Rukia has had the unfortunate duty of telling some women that they are not pregnant after all. "I had a lady who had been advised she was 20 weeks pregnant, but the ultrasound confirmed there was no pregnancy. In such a case it's good that I am a midwife because then I can provide counselling and relevant health education to the mother."

In many ways, her role as a sonographer has put her in touch with many more women than she normally would interact with, opening up the opportunity to provide information on family planning, birth spacing and women's health. Rukia's patients range from as young as 16 to women in their forties, tied by the need to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. "I can take action for things I find unusual, such as when I attended to a woman who was on her 16th pregnancy and not aware of family planning methods." The nurse-midwife-sonographer has been a boon to her community, as she uses technology to make a difference for the women she serves.







# YAHYA MOHAMMED ABASS

TEACHER, MENTOR.



## TEACHER, MENTOR.

It comes as no surprise to learn that Yahya Mohammed Abass's chosen role within nursing is teaching. His calm demeanour suggests the patience and wisdom required to steer adult learners in new directions.

When Yahya was in his youth, his younger brother suffered from asthma, and their parents would often ask him to step in and take care of his sibling. He did it so well that in time his parents suggested that he pursue nursing as a career, and he saw no reason to disagree. "You know it is a good idea to follow the instruction of one's elders; there's honour in showing respect, and blessings will come in the future. That's how I came to study nursing."

After graduating with his diploma from the Aga Khan University in 2008, Yahya went on to pursue a one-year teaching course, after which he was deployed to the College of Health Sciences to teach mental health, pharmacology, nutrition and first-aid. He found it immensely rewarding work. Beyond teaching, he also mentored young students, impressing upon them the critical importance of follow-through in their nursing duties. "My hope is that they will learn to be true professionals, who really take time to follow procedures when attending to clients. Understanding the negative impact of not providing proper care is so important for these students."

Currently, Yahya serves as a training officer in the capacity-building unit of Mnazi Mmoja Referral Hospital. It's a relatively new role but one where he sees immense potential. He gets to work with a class of 45 students each year as he steers them into new areas of clinical practice.

Reflecting on his time at AKU, he shares the challenge of working and studying. "Because we were in the distance learning course, being able to manage one's time efficiently was critical. In the community,

no one knows you are a student. They just know you are a health worker and they need care." The nature of distance learning brought an unexpected benefit – as the students in his cohort would seek each other out and make time to study together, teamwork skills improved considerably. He has held onto the lesson of collaboration and shares it continually with his students.

"My approach is one of mentorship, which I strongly believe in. While I understand that change takes time to happen, I am looking forward to seeing that change and the professional impact I have been able to make."

The learner became the teacher, and the lessons he learnt became the bedrock of what he offers new generations of nurses he stewards each day.



**"MY APPROACH IS ONE OF MENTORSHIP, WHICH I STRONGLY BELIEVE IN. WHILE I UNDERSTAND THAT CHANGE TAKES TIME TO HAPPEN, I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THAT CHANGE AND THE PROFESSIONAL IMPACT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE."**



# MARYAM KHAMIS

THE DILIGENT MANAGER.



## THE DILIGENT MANAGER.

Maryam Khamis embodies the role of a Block Manager at Mnazi Mmoja Referral Hospital with both diligence and grace. Her role is tied to her passion: transforming the well-being of patients within the Zanzibar region through her pursuit to eradicate non-communicable diseases such as cholera.

Being a people person certainly fuels Maryam's present success; however, she admits that a lot of it is also thanks to the education she received at the Aga Khan University, made possible by support from Johnson & Johnson and the Ministry of Health. This sponsorship enabled Maryam to significantly advance her nursing career through the certificate and degree programs. During her time at AKU, she learnt about mental health through a DSM IV course that equipped her with the skills necessary to undertake mental health assessments. The course has been critical for her and other individuals in the health sector. Community studies coursework moulded Maryam into the versatile professional she is today, able to easily interact with a variety of people in various settings. Whether delivering health education in the streets or to her patients in hospital, Maryam feels comfortable and confident. "Courses that I took at AKU make me proud because they greatly enhanced my capabilities at work."

For Maryam, her success is also the result of hard work and self-supervision. "Commitment was on both sides – the student's as well as the teacher's. We had to know to study for ourselves."

The Aga Khan University helped Maryam build a strong foundation in her career, and she remains ambitious in her goal of eliminating non-communicable diseases in Zanzibar. "I am almost 54 years old and close to retirement. But I am still keen to see non-communicable diseases eradicated here."

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