



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

## The President's Review

August 2026

### *President's Message*



Partnership is one of the pillars of AKU's strategic plan – for good reason. In a world shaped by shared challenges such as climate change, and marked by innovations with global implications such as artificial intelligence, going it alone is not an option.

Over the last few months, AKU has strengthened its local, national and international partnerships to a remarkable extent. Our partnerships continue to evolve in both depth and diversity, bringing together governments, universities, communities, multilateral organizations and

the Aga Khan Development Network to achieve common goals. It has been a proud time for the University, as we have seen AKU earn recognition and praise at the highest levels.

As the host of the World Health Summit's regional meeting in Nairobi, we connected more than 3,000 policymakers, researchers and clinicians to advance health in Africa. We saw our Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, meet with top officials in Pakistan, and heard the Prime Minister salute AKU's "major contributions in health care and higher education." Our Institute for Educational Development launched an important partnership with Sindh to support special needs education. In Kenya, the Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health and the World Health Organization began collaborating to improve cancer care for women. We also deepened longstanding partnerships and ties in Canada, Portugal and the United States.

I wish to thank everyone inside and outside the University who has made it possible for us to establish scores of mutually beneficial collaborations in the countries we serve and around the world – whether directly through relationship-building, or indirectly by strengthening our capacities. In doing so, you have helped us to ensure that solutions transcend geography, cultures and disciplines as quickly as challenges.

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### ***Partnership and Collaboration***



### **AKU Hosts World Health Summit Regional Meeting**

Held in Nairobi, the Summit brought together more than 3,000 participants from 80 countries, including President of Kenya William Ruto. Attendees delivered a clear message: Africa must take the lead in building the systems and institutions it needs to dramatically improve health. Read Dean Lukoye Atwoli's reflections on the conference [here](#), and find more details [here](#).

### **Prime Minister Applauds AKDN's and AKU's Work in Pakistan**

AKU's Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari and other top officials during a seven-day visit to Pakistan. His Highness also visited Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and met with members of the Ismaili community and senior provincial officials. "The Prime Minister encouraged AKDN to deepen and expand its partnership with Pakistan, particularly in GB and Chitral, where the network's institutional presence and community outreach are highly valued," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office reported. "He also welcomed enhanced engagement with Aga Khan University, noting its major contributions in health care and higher education." Read more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

### **IED and Sindh Government Partner on Inclusive Education**

The Institute for Educational Development will develop an Inclusive and Special Needs Education Unit and train more than 2,000 educators under an agreement signed by the Institute and Sindh government's Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. Sindh will contribute Rs 278.5 million (US\$ 1 million) to the initiative, while the University will contribute Rs 160.6 million (US\$ 578,000). [Read More](#)

### **Ties with Portuguese Institutions Deepen**

In May, representatives from AKU, the AKDN, the Portuguese government and Portuguese universities gathered in Lisbon to celebrate 10 years of the AKDN–Foundation for Science and Technology Programme. The \$20 million programme has funded 37 research projects around the world. Its next phase will focus on AI, climate

change and other fields. In July, AKU officials signed an agreement with the University of Coimbra to enable collaboration in health education and research. They also met with senior officials from Portugal's Ministry of Health to discuss future areas of cooperation. Read more [here](#) and [here](#)

### **AKU Supports NOVA's Bachelor's in Global Health**

AKU's Department of Community Health Sciences is helping NOVA University Lisbon to deliver its Bachelor's in Global Public Health. As the programme's international academic collaborator, the Department is contributing academic expertise, global perspectives and opportunities for experiential learning. [Read More](#)

### **President Shahabuddin Speaks at UAlberta Graduation**

President Shahabuddin addressed the University of Alberta's convocation for graduates of its nursing and law schools. He discussed the lessons he has learned leading institutions on two continents, and shared advice based on his experience. Watch his speech [here](#). While in Canada, President Shahabuddin met with University of Alberta President Bill Flanagan to advance the partnership between AKU and the U of A. He also visited Ismaili Jamatkhana in Edmonton and Toronto to update members of the Ismaili community on AKU's progress, and met with alumni as well as leaders from Toronto's Pakistani community. Read more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

### **WHO and AKU Join to Address Women's Cancers**

AKU's Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health, East Africa will collaborate with the World Health Organization to improve diagnosis of and care for breast and cervical cancer in Kenya under a newly signed agreement. The two diseases are the leading causes of cancer in the country, killing 7,000 women each year. [Read More](#)

### **AKU, Government to Collaborate to Improve Student Testing**

Under a grant from the Government of Pakistan's Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, the Institute for Educational

Development and the AKU Examination Board will support efforts to align provincial and national student tests such as the National Achievement Test with international frameworks for student assessment.

### **AKU, HEC Collaborate to Build Capacity in Nutrition**

Under an agreement with Pakistan's Higher Education Commission, seven AKU nutrition courses will be hosted on the National Academy of Higher Education's Learning Management System. The agreement makes the courses available for academics across Pakistan. **[Read More](#)**

### **Project to Upgrade National Museum of Pakistan Moves Forward**

Faculty and staff from AKU and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture convened with national and international experts as part of their effort to upgrade the National Museum of Pakistan in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Culture and Heritage. **[Read More](#)**

### **AKU and LUMS Ink Partnership Agreement**

AKU and the Lahore University of Management Sciences signed an agreement to collaboratively develop solutions to health, environmental and developmental challenges in Pakistan and beyond. **[Read More](#)**

### **University of Victoria Honours AKU**

The University of Victoria's Co-operative Education programme named AKU its International Partner of the Year, recognizing its role in providing Victoria students with outstanding learning opportunities. **[Read More](#)**

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### ***Research and Innovation***



### **Brain and Mind Institute Marks Five Years of Impact**

In its first five years, AKU's Brain and Mind Institute has secured more than \$14 million in research funding, published more than 270 peer-reviewed articles, and trained more than 11,000 individuals. To learn more about its efforts to improve mental health and brain health in Africa and Asia, check out its new Impact Report [here](#).

### **AI Platform Launches in Nairobi**

AKU's new AI-enabled clinical decision support platform, Afya Gemma, is being piloted across six outreach clinics in Nairobi. Built specifically for the Kenyan context, the platform provides frontline clinicians with clinical guidance to support them in delivering evidence-based care. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

### **Showcase Highlights AI and Digital Initiatives at AKU**

The Research Office organized a showcase to share how AKU researchers are using AI to address challenges in health, education and development. The event featured innovations in tuberculosis and cancer diagnostics, maternal and child health, radiotherapy, AI-supported learning and public health. In total, nearly 340 digital and AI-enabled initiatives are underway across the University. [Read More](#)

### **Study Reveals the Hidden Toll of Health Care Work**

Forty-three percent of health care workers reported experiencing symptoms of depression in an AKU study of more than 500 health care workers in five hospitals in Nairobi. “We cannot talk about quality health care without addressing the well-being of the people delivering that care,” said Dean Lukoye Atwoli, who co-led the study along with Zul Merali, Founding Director of AKU's Brain and Mind Institute. **[Read More](#)**

### **To Address Neglected Diseases, Listen to Communities**

Community-based efforts to reduce the spread of neglected tropical diseases in northern Tanzania should involve trusted local leaders, connect with residents’ motivations and align with seasonal risk patterns. That’s according to a study in *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases* by researchers from AKU’s Arusha Climate and Environmental Research Centre, Simon Fraser University and the Arkaria Impact Center. **[Read More](#)**

### **Researchers Examine the “Purpose-Driven University”**

Faculty and staff contributed four papers to a special issue of the Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice on purpose-driven universities. The issue, guest-edited by AKU’s Anil Khamis, explores how universities can move beyond conventional measures of success and orient their work more deliberately toward the needs of the societies they serve. **[Read More](#)**

### **AKU Revitalises ISMC to Focus on Research and Public Engagement**

AKU’s Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (ISMC) will reorient its role as a distinguished research and public engagement centre on global issues affecting Muslim societies. Over the next 18–24 months, ISMC will introduce new visiting and convening programmes, along with expanded virtual and in-person opportunities for public engagement. As part of this strategic shift, ISMC will discontinue its MA in Muslim Cultures degree while continuing to contribute to teaching at AKU’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences and other entities.

### **Media Scholar Contributes to Routledge Handbook**

Professor George Nyabuga, Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Media and Communications, published a chapter on democracy and civic engagement in Kenya in *The Routledge Handbook of Communication and Transnationalism*. **Read More**

### **Shaping a New International Guideline**

Heart disease, kidney disease, obesity and diabetes are often treated as separate conditions. A new international guideline brings these interconnected health challenges together under a single framework, helping clinicians to identify risks earlier and intervene more effectively. Among the contributors to the guideline is Dr Salim Virani, Vice Provost for Research. **Read More**

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### **Enhancing Health Care**



### **AKU Contributes to Global Ismaili Health Conference**

Pro-Chancellor Princess Zahra Aga Khan, President Sulaiman Shahabuddin and AKU leaders, faculty, staff and alumni played a prominent role at the Global Ismaili Health Professionals Conference in Houston, contributing their expertise to a wide range of discussions. The conference attracted 788 participants from six countries, including 140 AKU alumni. Read more **here** and **here**.

### **FMIC Expands Malnutrition Unit**

The AKU-managed French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children in Kabul doubled the size of its Malnutrition Unit to 24 beds to care for the large number of children in Afghanistan suffering from malnutrition. Since its establishment in 2022, the unit has cared for more than 7,100 children and become one of the country's leading centres for the treatment of malnutrition. La Chaîne de l'Espoir (Chain of Hope), the Government of France, the Aga Khan Foundation and UNICEF have provided essential support for the unit.

### **Robotic Surgery Advances in Nairobi and Karachi**

In a milestone for surgical care in East Africa, the Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi performed the region's first robotic gallbladder removal surgery. The achievement expands access to next-generation minimally invasive care and reinforces the Hospital's position as a regional leader. Meanwhile, the Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi will acquire two advanced robotic surgery systems. The Toumai Surgical Robotic System and the CORI Surgical System will help surgeons to perform numerous procedures and enhance outcomes for patients. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

### **New Specialty Clinic Opens in Gigiri**

The Aga Khan University Hospital opened a new specialty and executive clinic in Gigiri, the diplomatic centre of Nairobi. The opening ceremony was attended by Director General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Zainab Hawa Bangura, and other dignitaries. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

### **In Nigeria, AKUH Executive Discusses Reshoring African Health Care**

The Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi continues to strengthen its role as a regional destination for specialised care. At a gathering of CEOs in Nigeria, AKUH Chief Operating Officer Khurram Jamal highlighted the importance of developing international-quality hospitals in Africa at a

time when hundreds of thousands of Africans are travelling overseas for medical care. **[Read More](#)**

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### ***Building Capacity***



### **SONAM Celebrates 25 Years in East Africa**

The School of Nursing and Midwifery, East Africa celebrated its 25th anniversary with a gala dinner in Nairobi attended by government officials, partners, donors, alumni, students and leaders of professional associations, hospitals and universities. “SONAM’s contribution to shaping Kenya’s health landscape cannot be overstated,” said Dr Joel Gondi, Director of Primary Healthcare in the Ministry of Health. **[Read More](#)**

### **Pioneering Advanced Practice Nursing Programme Launches**

The School of Nursing and Midwifery and the Medical College launched Pakistan’s first Advanced Practice Nursing clinical residency programme. It is a one-year post-master’s programme designed to develop clinical nursing leaders who can improve patient outcomes and quality of care. **[Read More](#)**

### **New AKU Manual Aims to Enhance Paediatric Care**

The University launched the *AKU Manual of Paediatrics* to help physicians across Pakistan to provide high-quality care to children. The manual's 88 evidence-based guidelines reflect both the state of global science and the realities of health care delivery on the ground in Pakistan. It is available for free [here](#). Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal called it “an important step toward improving the quality and consistency of child health care.” **[Read More](#)**

### **Faculty Provide Training in Early Child Development in Syria**

AKU faculty members conducted a four-day workshop in Damascus, Syria, for 28 early child educators and practitioners, giving them practical strategies for supporting children's holistic development. The workshop is part of a five-part programme leading to a certificate in early child education. **[Read More](#)**

### **IHD and Partners Train a New Generation of Brain Researchers**

AKU's Institute for Human Development and its partner universities in South Africa, Zambia and Malawi are training more than 80 African scientists to carry out locally relevant research on brain health and development in children and adolescents. The initiative aims to nurture the next generation of brain health experts on the continent. **[Read More](#)**

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### ***Achieving Excellence***



### **New Accreditation for AKUH, Nairobi is a First in Africa**

The Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi's laboratory became the first in Africa to receive accreditation for point-of-care testing within its accredited scope from the South African National Accreditation System (SANAS). "For patients, this means greater confidence that test results are accurate, reliable, and consistent," said Hospital CEO Rashid Khalani. **Read More**

### **Medical College Accredited by Kenyan Authorities**

The Medical College, East Africa received joint accreditation from the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Council and the Commission for University Education after achieving an overall score of 92.9 percent in a comprehensive regulatory review. **Read More**

### **AKUH Receives Third Consecutive International Platinum Award**

The Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi has received its third consecutive Platinum Performance Achievement Award from the American College of Cardiology (ACC), recognising its consistent delivery of evidence-based care for patients experiencing heart attacks. This recognition means the hospital's patients receive cardiac care based on internationally recognised best practices, with the quality of care continuously reviewed to support safe, consistent and high-quality treatment. **Read More**

### **AKU Receives Two International Awards for Educational Excellence**

The Medical College, Pakistan won an ASPIRE Award for faculty development, while the Centre for Innovation in Medical Education won an ASPIRE Award for simulation. The awards are presented by the Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE) and recognize excellence in health professions education. **Read More**

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## Student News



### Students Win Gold at International Rowing Competition

MBBS students Rija Ahsan and Maryam Amer Malik were part of a team that won gold at the Vienna International Rowing Regatta in the girls 2,000-metre quadruple scull. The regatta hosted 1,700 athletes from 12 countries, making it one of the most competitive rowing events AKU students have competed in. **[Read More](#)**

### IED Students Share Insights with Policymakers

Students at the Institute for Educational Development in Karachi presented practical recommendations for improving the Sindh Education Policy to representatives of the Sindh Education Policy Commission and the School Education and Literacy Department. **[Read More](#)**

### Media Alumni, Students Win Journalism Awards

A half-dozen alumni and students of the Graduate School of Media and Communications won awards for their reporting at the Media Council of Kenya's 14th annual Media Excellence Awards. **[Read More](#)**

### Student-Authored Climate Dictionary Now Being Used by AKES

Students from the Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences published an Environment and Climate Change Dictionary. The dictionary is now publicly available and being used across Pakistan in schools run by the Aga Khan Education Services. **Read More**

### **Residents Get New Library, Auditorium in Dar es Salaam**

The University unveiled a new library and 60-seat auditorium for its residents in Tanzania. Forty physicians are currently enrolled in AKU's postgraduate medical education programmes and are receiving training at the Aga Khan Hospital, Dar es Salaam. **Read More**

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### ***Prioritizing the Environment***



### **New Laboratory Will Support Climate Research**

AKU will build a Climate and Environmental Research Laboratory in Karachi with the help of a generous gift from the Kanji family. The lab will enable researchers from the Institute for Global Health and Development to analyze how environmental factors such as air pollution and extreme heat affect human health and well-being. **Read More**

### **Grants Support In-House Sustainability Projects**

The University awarded grants to nine projects that will enhance sustainability on AKU's campuses. Among the projects is one that will continue efforts to reduce the use of nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas, at the Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi. The Hospital has already reduced its use of nitrous oxide by 60 percent. **[Read More](#)**

### **Voices from the Roof of the World Comes to PIA**

Passengers on Pakistan International Airlines can now watch films from Voices from the Roof of the World (VRW), an award-winning series of environmental documentaries produced by AKU and other AKDN agencies and made possible by the support of generous donors. **[Read More](#)**

### **In Indonesia, ISMC Explores Islam and Ecological Crisis**

The Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations held a two-day workshop on "Islam in Times of Climate Crisis" in Indonesia, in collaboration with Universitas Gadjah Mada and Harvard University's Asia Center. Scholars from seven countries explored how Islamic traditions have shaped responses to ecological crises over time.

### **Climate Change-Fueled Heat Waves Threaten Pregnant Women**

A story in *Dialogue Earth* provides an in-depth look at the impact of extreme heat on low-income pregnant women in Pakistan, and highlights the efforts of AKU's Institute for Global Health and Development to address the problem. **[Read More](#)**

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### ***Leadership News***



### **New FAS Dean Appointed**

Associate Professor Kulsoom Ghias was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Professor Ghias has been an AKU faculty member since 2008 and has served as Chair of the Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences for the past seven years. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Virginia and a PhD from Northwestern University in the United States. She did her post-doctoral fellowship at Northwestern's Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center. Professor Ghias takes over from Professor of Anthropology Stephen Lyon, who led FAS for four years as its Inaugural Dean. **Read More**

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### ***Individual Honours and Awards***



Faculty, staff and alumni continue to receive prestigious honours and awards from around the world. Professor Zulfiqar Bhutta was appointed Chairman of the Board of Governors of the National Institutes of Health by the Government of Pakistan, while Jane Rarieya, Dean of IED, EA was appointed to serve on the international jury for the UNESCO-Hamdan Prize for Teacher Development. AKU alumna Sumaira Khawaja-Punjwani received the Sitara-e-Nursing Award from the Pakistan Nursing and Midwifery Council. For a complete list of honorees **[click here](#)**.

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### ***Did You Know?***



At our Uganda campus, already vibrant with students and active health services, construction on the Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH), Kampala is moving swiftly. Set to open in 2028, the hospital will introduce international-quality care in two dozen specialties, further expanding AKDN's integrated health network in East Africa. To help bring this vision to life, explore opportunities to join our team **[here](#)**.

AKU appointed renowned Maasai elder, development practitioner and policy expert **Alais Ole Morindat** as Adjunct Faculty in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

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### ***Did You See?***



Meet **Aliza**, a student-athlete chasing dreams on and off the field at AKU!

Check out the low-cost **heel-prick simulator** designed by the Centre for Innovation in Medical Education and the Department of Pathology to advance newborn screening.



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