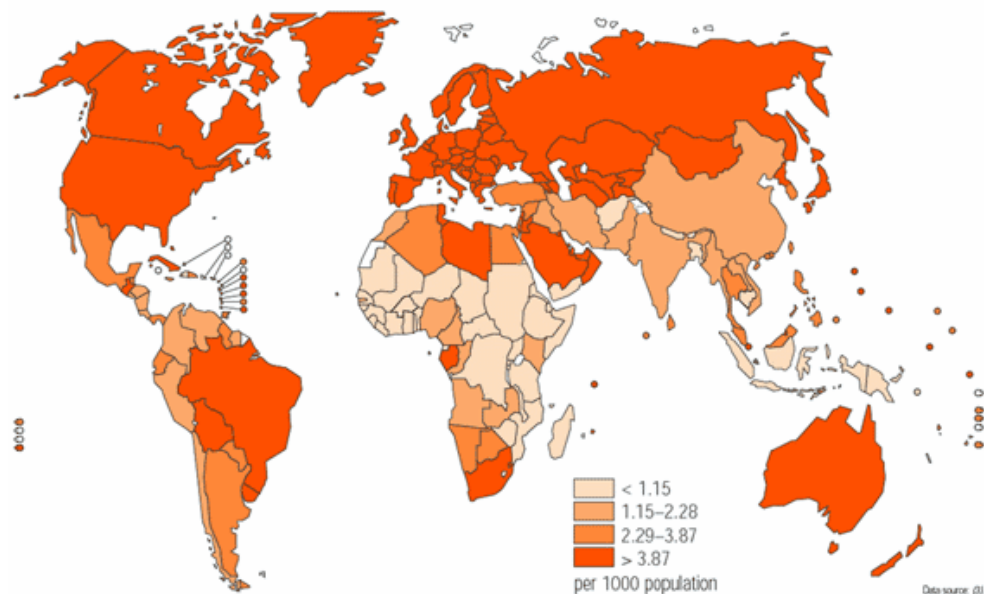


Advanced Nursing Studies (ANS) Program in East Africa

PROBLEM

The global distribution of health workers reflects an imbalance in the needs and resources of countries. Sub-Saharan Africa serves as the most striking example. The countries in that region suffer from a severe shortage of health workers, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and management and support staff. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that while sub-Saharan Africa has 11% of the world's population and 24% of the global burden of disease, it has only 3% of the world's health workers. Furthermore, a direct relationship exists between the ratio of health workers to population and survival of women during childbirth and children in early infancy. As the number of health workers decreases, survival declines proportionately.

WORLD DISTRIBUTION OF HEALTH WORKERS



Source: WHO (2006). *The World Health Report 2006 – Working Together for Health*. Geneva, World Health Organization.

Across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, more than 100 million people are served by only 7,500 doctors and 70,000 nurses and midwives. There is further disparity between rural and urban settings, where 80% of doctors practice. In rural areas, more than 90% of basic health services are provided by nurses. The shortage is made worse by the migration of health professionals; an estimated 30,000 African health professionals work outside the continent.

Needless to say, shortages of health care workers, especially nurses, are a significant barrier to attaining better health for populations. One estimate suggests that sub-Saharan African countries need more than 600,000 additional nurses to meet the Millennium Development Goals. (*International Council for Nurses [2004]. The Global Shortage of Registered Nurses: An Overview of Issues and Actions.*)

According to the WHO, known, affordable interventions can prevent 65% of the 11 million deaths of children under five that occur around the world every year. Failure to apply knowledge to action is called the "Know-Do Gap." Health workers such as nurses and midwives with better education and knowledge resources are the principal weapons to address this problem. At the same time, it is important

to improve the capability of institutions of higher learning to deliver continuing nurse education and to strengthen nurse leadership and management capabilities.

Nurses constitute the largest percentage of health care providers in the East African region, offering the full range of care at all levels of the system - from health centers in remote rural villages to intensive care units in sophisticated urban hospitals. Nurses contribute extensively to the improvement of public health and are widely present in rural sites where they are often the first point of contact for patients seeking health care services. At the same time, many nurses caring for patients at higher level facilities often face life-threatening, emergency situations and find themselves insufficiently prepared. In general, quality of patient care and nursing management has suffered due to a lack of ongoing skills training and education for nurses, in part because healthcare budgets in East Africa are stretched to the limit.



These Advanced Nursing Studies students aspire to become nurses, who constitute the largest percentage of health care providers in East Africa.

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK'S RESPONSE

The Advanced Nursing Studies (ANS) program prepares nurses to meet the challenges they face within the health systems of East Africa, specifically in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The program was initiated based on the results of surveys conducted at the Aga Khan University campuses in East Africa, which were opened and started programs in Uganda in 2000, and in Kenya and Tanzania in 2002.



The ANS program gives Enrolled Nurses (ENs) the opportunity to increase their qualifications and become Registered Nurses (RNs). These students, who work in various hospitals in and around Nairobi, are preparing for exams. The program offers innovative education using a flexible 'modularized' approach to allow nurses, hospital administrators and senior medical directors to upgrade their skills and credentials while working.

The second program targets RNs and enables them to acquire a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) degree. An additional program known as the Advanced Specialist Diploma in Accident, Emergency and Disaster Management is offered in Kenya.

The vision of the program is to provide relevant, innovative, accessible, affordable, and needs-based training programs for nurses and midwives in order to prepare a critical mass of qualified professionals who will be able to provide quality care to populations, thereby enhancing the overall health status of the people of East Africa.

ANS builds on the knowledge, skills and experiences that nurses already possess. The program focuses on upgrading the skills of practicing nurses and providing graduate program opportunities for those seeking to further their nursing careers at the leadership level. Two main programs are offered. The first is the opportunity for Enrolled Nurses (ENs) to become Registered Nurses (RNs).

Flexible and Needs-centered

An important aspect of the ANS program is its flexibility. The program offers opportunities for nurses in the region to obtain higher professional qualifications without leaving their workplace for extended periods of time. A schedule consists of one full day of theory classes; one day of practical, bedside training; and clinical supervisions by faculty each week. The schedule enables nurses to study at their own pace. The modular approach allows nurses to study part-time, accumulate credits towards a diploma or degree, and stop and resume the program as circumstances and needs dictate. Furthermore, the two-year (four-semester) EN-RN program has been offered through a distance learning mode in Kenya as of 2004. Distance learning opportunities were introduced in Tanzania and Uganda in 2006, which allows students from Zanzibar to enroll in the program as well. The Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (BScN) is a 30-month upgrading program, and students come to the campus for two days a week. For the rest of the working week they are able to continue working at their places of employment, while also studying independently through well-structured, self-directed assignments.

AKU Graduation Ceremony, Uganda - Valedictorian Speech, 2006:

“...Aga Khan University enables nurses to study and at the same time keep their jobs, which is quite a unique innovation that other universities, both public and private, in the country may wish to emulate. In addition, the University offers other services with a difference. For example, a number of strategies are used to enhance learning: the faculty make studying conducive for there is free interaction with them, continuous feedback and encouragement to students. This has been very useful in guiding and facilitating the students to learn and achieve their training goals in the set time.”

“... yet another approach to training, distance learning, has been introduced. Distance learning enables nurses working up-country and those unable to come to Aga Khan University campus to pursue their studies while they continue with their jobs. Distance learning is therefore, a very timely and very necessary addition to the existing strategies to enhance learning/training as education of nurses and midwives is re-shaping itself.”



Left: In the library of the Aga Khan University's ANS program, nursing students prepare for exams by working in groups.



Right: In the computer laboratory of the Aga Khan University's ANS program, nursing students carry out part of their course work and examine data.

Capacity Building and Strengthening Leadership in the Health Sector

At its core, the ANS program represents an attempt to build the capacity of the health sector in the East African region. As a result of updating their training and enhancing their skill sets, nurses become better equipped to influence the development of health care reform. By upgrading nursing skills, improving the quality of health care, and developing a new, more professional nursing leadership, the ANS program strengthens health systems and contributes to an overall improvement in the health status of the population.



Objectives of the Advanced Nursing Studies program:

- Develop and expand the core competencies of nurses and midwives in East Africa to provide quality care to patients, families and communities guided by evidence based practice;
- Strengthen nursing and midwifery leadership in areas of education, practice, research and community service;
- Develop the skills required by nurses and midwives to make an integral contribution to the strengthening of health systems in the region;
- Provide innovative undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate and continuing education relevant to the health needs of the East African region;
- Provide practicing nurses with a flexible, practical approach to meeting their educational needs;
- Increase access to continuing and higher education for professional development of nurses, majority of who are women;
- Strengthen the capacity of nurses and midwives in the region to conduct research on health-related issues;
- Develop an appropriate social responsibility culture and role in the ANS programs of Aga Khan University.



In the skills laboratory of the Aga Khan University's ANS program, students learn how to check the health of a patient, using a dummy, overseen by Conny Mureithi, a BSc lecturer.

The ANS program has been very well received since its commencement, and the demand for it is increasing in East Africa. The program continues to train nurses and midwives in an innovative manner, ultimately leading to an improved practice of evidence-based medicine and positive effects on the communities in which the nurses live and work. The ANS program is well-regarded and deemed effective, as evidenced by its negotiations and relationships with Ministries of Health and Education, as well as the World Health Organization.

Results

As of 2008, there were 725 graduates. Most graduates of the post-RN BScN program are occupying leadership positions in health care delivery systems; about 94% of the EN-RN graduates were moved into first-line management positions as ward managers. As of December 2006, 614 Aga Khan University's Advanced Nursing Studies students were enrolled in the region. (For a breakdown by country, degree, and employment category, please see table below.) 214 additional students completed their training and graduated in 2006.

Total number of students enrolled in the ANS program as at December 2006				
Programme	Kenya	Tanzania	Uganda	Sub-Total
BScN 2004	43	35	19	97
BScN 2005	40	39	31	110
BScN 2006	45	37	27	109
EN-RN 2005	98	30	35	163
EN-RN 2006	51	39	31	121
Specialist Diploma 2005	14	0	0	14
Totals	291	180	143	614
Distribution by employment category				
Country	Government	Aga Khan Health Services	Private sector	Sub-Total
Kenya	99	91	101	291
Tanzania	111	20	49	180
Uganda	85	0	58	143
Totals	267	131	194	614

Quotes from the Class of 2006:

“My experience as a student exposed me to a wide range of experiences and added extensively to the knowledge and skills I require in my profession.”

“The impact of the education I am gaining here at AKU is directly felt by society; we are now able to provide quality services to our people.”

“I am extremely grateful and thankful to the people who came up with the idea of starting AKU. This is where I have been able to make my dreams come true by converting from EN to RN. Before this happened, my working situation was a nightmare but thanks to AKU and Johnson & Johnson [a major private donor for the program] being there for me, I now face a bright future.”



Paul Kahoro, an ANS student, carries out his clinical work and practice at the Aga Khan Hospital, Nairobi. Here he is working in the intensive care unit and checking the condition of a patient.

Johnson & Johnson, one of the largest Fortune 500 companies in the U.S. and a leading worldwide manufacturer of healthcare products, is a proud sponsor of the ANS program:



“Johnson & Johnson has provided financial support to Aga Khan Foundation for a number of programs. One key initiative is to strengthen the basic health care systems in East Africa by developing and training nurses for the delivery of primary care. Significant health deficiencies and the lack of providers of health services are a direct result of economic underdevelopment. Bolstering the nursing corps is a critically important step to help those in greatest need, while the process of simultaneously fostering economic development is underway. Aga Khan Foundation is a driving force in strengthening long-term community health and is a key to the partnership.”

~ Alfred Mays, recently retired as Vice President, Worldwide Corporate Contributions at Johnson & Johnson

“In East Africa, we support Aga Khan University’s Advanced Nursing Studies program to provide quality education to nurses and midwives through innovative, cost-effective means. Johnson & Johnson supports the Enrolled Nurses to Registered Nurses program, which gives nurses in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda the opportunity to further develop their professional skills and improve health care through evidenced-based practices.”

~ Conrad Person, Director of Johnson & Johnson’s International Programs and Product Giving, Corporate Contributions



Women bring their children to a mobile clinic in Kenya for growth monitoring of their infants. The nurse checks the baby’s weight on the scale. The Advanced Nursing Studies program’s modular approach allows nurses to study part-time and continue working.