

Africa Regional Nursing Now Meeting

Carol Natukunda and Faith Nawagi narrate the activities at the Africa Regional Nursing Now meeting hosted in Kampala, Uganda

The Year of the Nurse and Midwife in the Africa Region got off to a strong start with the Africa Region Nursing Now meeting in Kampala on 3–4 February 2020. Nursing Now is a global campaign that seeks to improve health globally by raising the status and profile of the nurses and midwives. Launched in 2018, the campaign has over 528 Nursing Now groups in over 112 countries, actively working to influence policy and to empower nurses and midwives to take their place in tackling the 21st century health challenges.

Professor Sheila Tlou, Co-Chair of the Nursing Now Campaign Board, told the meeting that Africa is now a major place of influence for the campaign, accounting for 16% of the number of the Nursing Now Groups.

She observed that the groups have been particularly important in encouraging cross-institutional collaboration with the aim of achieving progress for the nursing profession, and health for all across the region.

- In Uganda, the campaign has contributed to data collection for the State of the World's Nursing report, which will be released during 2020 by the International Council of Nurses. The campaign also led to the commissioning of the Uganda Midwives Association and hosting the first Nurses Midwives conference.
- In Rwanda, the Nursing Now Campaign has established a community-based health insurance scheme encouraging access to health services and a disability inclusion program that empowers and advocates for nurses and midwives with disabilities.
- In Ghana, the groups prompted the country's biggest nursing conference in 2019.
- In Malawi, the campaign has influenced stronger collaboration between the National Organisation of Nurses and Midwives of Malawi and the Ministry of Health.

Nightingale challenge

The meeting also deliberated on the Nightingale Challenge – an initiative which asks every employer around the world to provide leadership and development training for young nurses and midwives during 2020. The Challenge began with six early adopters, including Uganda's Mulago National Referral Hospital. This has grown to 51 employers in 13 countries across the conti-

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ment and has reached over 1300 Nurses and Midwives.

Prof Lisa Bayliss Prat, the Nightingale Challenge Nursing Now Program Lead, said this will empower the next generation of nurses and midwives as leaders, practitioners and advocates in health.

However, the meeting noted that the problems facing the nurses and midwife go beyond limited political support and health to lack of self-confidence, communication and public speaking skills.

Nurses and midwives were therefore urged to organise themselves into professional associations which would help them confront their challenges.

'Be confident to do things better,' said Lord Nigel Crisp, the Nursing Now Campaign Global Board Co-Chair. Dr Diana Atwine, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health concurred: 'Nurses must be involved. Have the voice of reason. Have a strategic plan. Doctors cannot decide for you. You are a big force. No one can ignore you.'

Nurses make up more than half the entire health workforce, deliver 90% of the hands-on care and are the solution to Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Sustainable Development Goals and tackling Non-Communicable Diseases. However, the world needs 18 million more health workers to achieve UHC by 2030 (WHO 2019). Approximately half of that shortfall – 9 million health workers – are nurses and midwives.

2020 plans for the region

Prof Annette Kennedy, the President of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), said the Year of the Nurse and Midwife 2020 will not just celebrate Florence Nightingale's 200th birthday but also make people aware of the actual work that nurses do, to enhance their profile and get them into leadership positions.

ICN plans to recognise this year by launching of the State of World Nursing Report 2020 among other activities. The WHO Regional Office also plans to launch the 2020 regional report on nursing and midwifery.

Coordinated by the African Center for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST), the Regional Nursing Now meeting attracted about 70 participants from Botswana, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the UK and Geneva.

The meeting also endorsed the Nursing Now anthem, which was composed by the student nurses from Nsambya Hospital.

At the sidelines of the event, the Nursing Now Board met with Uganda's prime minister Rt Hon Ruhakana Ruganda and the Minister of Health Dr Jane Ruth Aceng.