

Valedictorian Address by Ndawula Paddy
Diploma in General Nursing Graduate
Convocation of the Aga Khan University
Kampala, Uganda, 8 February 2020

The Chief Guest: Honourable Professor Francis Gervase Omaswa,
Members of the Board of Trustees,
President Firoz Rasul,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the Faculty, Staff and Alumni,
Our sponsors and employers,
Our dear family members, friends and guardians,
And my fellow graduands.



It is with extreme privilege and indeed, I am profoundly honoured and exceedingly humbled to stand before you at an incredible moment in time in such a place before such an audience. I am forever grateful for the opportunity.

Let us start by paying respect to Aisha Namutebi, Alex Kinyera, and Kyakuwaire Sharon our classmates and our alumna the Commissioner Nursing Mrs. Petua Olobo Kiboko who passed away by observing a moment of silence.

I want to begin by expressing gratitude first by thanking God for being good because without Him this monumental success would not be possible. Secondly, and most profoundly, I want to thank His Highness the Aga Khan for his imaginative and visionary leadership through which this University exists and for his generous support that we have immensely benefitted from.

Next, I want to thank, the Aga Khan University leadership and administration that has designed a system and a structure that has made our stay in AKU a purely magical experience. We have seen the lives of our fellow alumni who have gone before us change and they inspired us to join this magnificent University and I authoritatively testify that we are now the true professionals to take up the mantle. We extend our cordial thanks and appreciation to our sponsors, Johnson and Johnson. Oh my God! The incredible work you have done is literally turning dreams into reality in our lives. The employers who sponsor their employees like the Uganda Cancer Institute, Mulago National Referral Hospital and other distinguished institutions for a strong partnership with the University.

The esteemed faculty that has constantly imparted us with knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences. For this nobility they are the pride of our nation and the glory of our republic and the academic pillars of the Aga Khan University. Why? Because they keep on supplying our health sector with well-trained professionals with fresh ideas. For lifelong friends we have got, I thank God for the blessing of knowing and loving you but most significantly the gift of

experiencing our challenges and joys together. I would be remiss if I do not thank the non-teaching staff that have made our Aga Khan University environment safe to pursue our dreams and lastly but most importantly our beloved parents, spouses, children, guardians, brothers and sisters for being a constant source of support, encouragement and inspiration.

Convocation is every student's dream. To be here today is a goal we have aspired for, and I proudly congratulate and thank you my fellow graduands for making this dream a reality. But, this is what Mike Tyson said "In order to be the greatest that has ever lived you need to be everyone living". But we all know that greatness is not given, it is earned. So, my brothers and sisters, I request you to join in the most fulfilling mission a person could have, the most profound contribution anyone can ever make that is to honour your profession by serving to improve the health of the people so that we can up lift our nation because nothing can be out of reach of a Nation with a healthy population.

With a treasured and shared history, nursing and midwifery have existed for about 100 years in Uganda and yet less than 10% of nurses and midwives have attained a bachelor's degree and this is greatly attributed to the structural and systemic malaise of the administration and education system for nurses and midwives in Uganda. This has caused some nurses and midwives have poor standards of living, quit the profession and fail to reach their destined heights of professional and human achievements.

We have seen some nurses obtaining their master's degree a few years to retirement. We are a body of about 65,000 nurses and midwives but surprisingly about 45,000 are employed and close to 20,000 are unemployed making it a 30% unemployment rate for nurses and midwives. It is in our mandate to design and create the future of nursing and our creation will be the inheritance of the next generation. In this era, we need to create education policies, systems and structures that are symbiotic and generic to our profession. Why? Because it is contingent upon us to prepare for the next generation and the future of nursing and healthcare in general so as to improve health of our people. Ladies and gentlemen, this mandate is our calling.

Nursing and education were founded on a rich reservoir of professional pride and a tremendous desire to love and serve without discrimination of any kind. These virtues are to be propagated and irrigated but not to be suppressed. We want to rediscover old truths, unravel old mysteries, and make thrilling breakthroughs by changing our perspective because human existence is paradoxically so frail and yet so powerful. Hooking into that power is what allows us to turn struggles into triumphs, bring visions into existence and dreams into reality by breathing new life into dying hope, the hope that sees the invisible, feels the intangible, believes the impossible and delivers the unimaginable.

In order for nursing and education in Uganda to leave a towering legacy for every generation, we need to make success, prosperity and excellence of nurses, midwives and educationists not just a possibility but an absolute inevitability.

Thank you all. May God richly bless you all.

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