

NKUMBA UNIVERSITY

Nkumba University to graduate 1,500

By Ritah Mukasa

Over 1,500 students are going to be awarded certificates, diplomas, bachelors' and master's degrees during Nkumba University's 22nd graduation ceremony tomorrow.

The Vice-president, Edward Kiwanuka Ssekandi, will be guest of honour at the function which will be held at the university main campus in Nkumba, Entebbe.

This year, 10 students will be awarded PhDs. They include George Alowo, Jude Kateete, Anne Abaho, Esther Namugumya and Sammy Poro Godfrey.

Others are Innocent Muramuzi, Jafar Umar Lawal, Hamza Kanka Yusuf, Omar Khalifan Bizuru and Hillary Emmanuel Musoke.

The graduation coincides with celebrations to mark the university's silver jubilee.

Prof. Wilson Muyinda Mande, the vice-chancellor, says the graduands are from different fields such as nursing, education, social sciences, environmental and public health and business administration, among others. "Nkumba University's doctorate is one of the strongest in the country, the reason we get many applicants every year. For example, this year we rejected over 45 applicants," he says.

Sammy Godfrey Poro Polo will be awarded a doctorate in education (curriculum studies). Poro works with Unicef at the regional branch in Gulu. The former primary school teacher, who joined as an education officer, was recently promoted to adolescent development specialist.

"My PhD journey has been tough but exciting. It has taken me four years to accomplish. I was given a timeframe of three years to five years to complete," he says.

The 57-year-old had to balance many hats on his head as a family man, dedicated employee and student. Luckily, he has swam in the deep end of the pool and emerged victorious.

"Whenever I contemplated giving up, I would remind myself of my dream of being a doctor and inspiring my whole family. This pushed me to cling on," he reveals.

Poro says he stopped in Senior Four and enrolled in a primary teachers' training college for a grade III



The School of Sciences at Nkumba University. The university will hold its 22nd graduation ceremony tomorrow



Prof. Wilson Muyinda Mande



Sammy Godfrey Poro



Hillary Emmanuel Musoke



Anne Abaho

certificate. After teaching for about three years, he upgraded to a grade V teacher and a few years later he joined Makerere University, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in education.

Poro yearned to fulfill his childhood dream no matter what it took. He pursued and acquired a master's degree at Gulu University. In 2015, he enrolled for a PhD, which he has achieved.

He says it takes commitment, hard work, coupled with a strong support system, to sail through. He had the commitment, despite the many odds stacked against him. He applauded the university for the support they gave him.

"Nkumba was very committed to helping us. They held seminars, such as one where professors took us through how to formulate our proposals from chapter one to three. This alone was useful preparation for us," Poro says. He also appreciates the

dedication of his supervisors; Prof. Andrew Peter Yiga and Assoc. Prof. Julius Caesar Enon for keeping him on the right track through constant calls and meetings to check on his progress.

"PhD also needs a lot of mentorship and help from the seniors such as doctors and professors. I must applaud the PhD fraternity at Nkumba for the guidance and support they extend to the students," he says adding that: "Just as the university motto says 'I owe you', indeed I owe a lot to Nkumba, especially the directorate of post-graduate studies, for supporting me to fulfill my dream."

Anne Abaho Abaho will be awarded a doctorate in public administration (security studies).

At 34 years, the mother of five has been working at Nkumba University for the last 10 years. She lectures at the faculty of social

sciences with a specialty in international relations and security. She is the current dean of students.

Abaho would best suit Margaret Thatcher's 'Iron Lady' title.

Why? Because amidst the tight schedules as a full-time lecturer, she did not shy away from having a family and being a hands-on mother.

In the mix of dotting her infants, including twins, she added pursuing a doctorate on the list.

"I chose to study from Nkumba University due to the convenience and financial support. I maximised the staff development fund to achieve my PhD dream," she says.

Abaho, however, says while some people may think that being an insider increased her chances of passing, this does not in any way favour a student because if it was the case then all the lecturers would have PhDs.

Abaho says her journey has been a tough, but interesting

one.

She enrolled in 2016 when her twins were just a year old. Apart the babies that obviously needed her full attention, she was teaching and running university errands normally.

"When the twins turned two years, I conceived again. This time, the journey became even more tough, but I was determined to battle to the end. I managed to balance all my responsibilities though it was stressing," she recalls.

Abaho also stuck to the work plans and submitted the assignments on time. As luck would have it, three years later, Abaho's title has changed to doctor.

"Four months ago, I had another baby and I am happy that I have walked the PhD road with my babies," she asserts. Her first-born is six years old.

Abaho upholds the support she has got from her family as well as her supervisors; Assoc. Prof. Michael Mawa and Dr

Solomon Asimwe. "I have relied on their support. We have walked the journey together and they have given me all the support I needed.

"Sometimes I regretted my decision, but they encouraged me to stay focused," she reminisces.

Hillary Emmanuel Musoke Musoke had never dreamt of pursuing a PhD for the fear of what it entails to achieve one.

However, what started as an attempt to feel how hot the waters are with one foot has led Musoke to the list of the few PhD holders in the country.

He will be awarded with a doctorate in business administration (procurement systems and health care service delivery).

"I have always topped my class right from primary through university. I was retained to teach procurement and logistics at Nkumba after I emerged the best master's student in my year," he says.

Meanwhile, Musoke says he decided to enrol for the doctorate after realising that few lecturers had PhDs.

Besides, being close to the President, Musoke says he always handles people's complaints about what needs to be done to improve lives.

He realised that research helps to come up with relevant policies and decisions, saying the only way he would equip himself better was to enrol for a doctorate.

Musoke is the private secretary to President Yoweri Museveni in charge of youth, agriculture, value addition, innovation and export promotion. He is also the personal assistant to Maj. Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba.

"In 2012, I started this tough journey. Because I have always been a performer, I thought I would accomplish it in three years, but my schedules could not allow me," he recounts.

"I have been carrying my books with me to read whenever I find a few minutes, even on a plane. One time I had to walk into a library in South Africa to read," Musoke says.

He attributes his success to Nkumba University more so, his supervisors; Prof Wilson M. Mande and Assoc. Prof. A. K. Mpaata for the support they have accorded him all through.

"I am excited to be a doctor because as a child, I aspired to be a medical doctor or pharmacist but things turned out differently. Luckily, I am finally one," Musoke says.