



University of Dar es Salaam

Our January 2021 UDSM Alumna

This is a “light corner” on the UDSM portal intended to feature for one month in turns two among many of the University’s graduates—alumni—since its foundation in 1961. The corner is designed to inform the public and the University itself, without prejudice in terms of historical precedence but guided only by professional information search, on the past graduates of the University, their whereabouts, their current position or engagement, what is remembered of them as past ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ of their time and, finally, on what is reckoned about their contribution to their Alma Mater, their nation, the Africa region and/or the wider world.

Cathleen SEKWAO [née MCHUNO]



Year of matriculation: 1971;

Year of graduation: 1974;

Degree: BSc (Honours) in Biology.

More info:

- **M.Sc. (1978), University of Dar es Salaam;**
- **Post-Graduate Diploma (PGD) in Microbiology (1981), University of Dundee, UK**

Cathleen Sekwao [née Mchuno]—the immediately past National Coordinator of the Tanzania Education Network (TEN/MET)—is our ‘UDSM Alumna of the Month’ for January 2021. She was born on the 13th of December 1948, in Kilosa district, Morogoro region, obtaining her education at Mamboya primary school (1957–1960), Mvumi Middle School (1961–1964), Msalato Secondary School (1965–1968, for Forms I–IV) and Korogwe Girls High School (1969–1970, for Forms V–VI or Advanced level). She was one of the best girls in the science subjects, especially in Biology. With principal passes in the Advanced-level secondary examination results, she secured fast admission, in 1971, to pursue an undergraduate degree programme at the University of Dar es Salaam’s Faculty of Science, which she successfully completed in 1974. Upon graduation from the University, she was posted to the Dar es Salaam Technical College (DTC) as an instructor/lecturer. She served at DTC for a continuous period of 24 years from 1974 to 1998, where, for more than half of this period, i.e. for fourteen years from 1980 to 1994, she was head of the Science and Laboratory Technology Department. Her twenty-four-year teaching career at DTC [now Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology, DIT] was professionally punctuated twice by breaks for postgraduate study pursuits. In 1978, she had to undertake a two-year research study programme for the Master of Science degree in Biology at the University of Dar es Salaam and, in 1981 she had to leave the country for a Post-Graduate Diploma (PGD) in Microbiology at the University of Dundee in Scotland, UK.

In 1998, Cathleen took up appointment with the UNESCO Dar es Salaam Cluster Office as a Programme Officer (Education), working in this role for a total of 12 years up to 2010. In UNESCO, she was engaged, first, as a gender focal person (1998–2005), doubling as a member of the UN Gender Working group (2001 to 2005); then as a UNESCO Dar es Salaam Education and Gender Focal person (2006–2010). In this capacity, she had the mandate and the necessary support to ensure ‘mainstreaming of gender’ in the United Nations’ educational development assistance programme for the UN Offices in Dar es Salaam. Along with this, she served also as UNESCO-Dar es Salaam HIV/AIDS focal person and a member of the UN Working Group on HIV and AIDS. In this capacity, she coordinated and managed implementation of programmes in HIV/AIDS preventive education, care-and-life-skill training and support for facilitators for primary and secondary school teachers, teacher educators and university teachers. Mrs Sekwao participated in the formulation of HIV/AIDS national policies (for both Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar), as well as in the development of strategic plans, guidelines and training manuals.

In October 2012, Cathleen Sekwao was engaged by the Tanzania Education Network [in Kiswahili Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania]—abbreviated simply as TEN/MET, as National Coordinator. Having been originally established in April 1999 by a coalition of 39 non-governmental organisations, TEN/MET had grown into a wide network of active non-governmental actors in education, constituting a wide range of community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs) and other national and international institutions with a common concern for and interest in promoting quality education in Tanzania. Cathleen took up the challenge of pushing through the core objective of working and linking with other actors in education in order to influence policies and practices on basic education for all in Tanzania and the East African region both in a collective and informed manner. Her contract formally ended in December 2018, after a dedicated six years of pushing high the agenda of quality basic education for all - as envisioned, among other provisions, in standards of

classroom structures, teaching-learning processes, a supportive school infrastructure for female pupil attendance, and institutionalised professional standards and backups in teacher training and teacher practice. Mrs Sekwao is on record to have exerted a consistent effort and tone in ceasing opportunities to organise sessions in order to interact with stakeholders in basic education provision, particularly those involved in primary and the lower levels of secondary education. Discussions have centred on obligations, standards, yardsticks and desired outcomes of a well-administered, well-supervised as well as well-monitored national educational programme for the country.

One laudable example of such interactions was the Sida/Sweden-supported Joint Education-Sector Review in 2013–14 that focused on the contribution of CSOs to the delivery of basic education in Tanzania. Several CSOs were noted, such as WeWorld, providing training for 13 pre-primary teachers as well as training for 52 maths and English teachers in Ludewa, Arusha and Meru districts. Also noted were many other CSOs, such as the Aga Khan Foundation, the Children’s Book Project (CBP), FAWETZ, OCODE and FADICE assisting in many other aspects. TEN/MET and its like-minded associates such as Haki-Elimu and UWEZO have helped in raising a sharp and collaborative voice to government towards raising the level of education, the quality of classroom teaching-and-learning and school infrastructure so as to emulate globally reckoned quality indicators of education. But Sekwao, like her predecessor, has fought hard to get a professional regulatory body, the Tanzania Teachers’ Professional Board, established in order to define and regulate standards, codes of teacher conduct, as well as decisions and innovations within the teaching profession in the country. The crusade has gone on now for the last 12 years of a long, sometimes painful journey since a study was first undertaken and recommendations were made, in 2007/2008, for such a body to be legislated.

Cathleen is now happily retired, but in no way really tired: she remains a seasoned consultant in research and training, with a record of wide knowledge and experience on networking and coalition-building; and on programming from the stage of problem identification to programme evaluation. This is particularly in the areas of early childhood care and development as well as in needs-assessment and strategic planning. The UDSM is enthused by her work and achievements.



In 2015: At the opening of an annual global ‘Education For All (EFA)’ Week, organised annually by TEN/MET in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, TAMISEMI and regional education teams in events organised on a rotating regional basis.



Every 11th October: TEN/MET organises International Day of the Girl-Child (IDGC) events concerning challenges in education, such as gender inequality, child marriage and early pregnancies – matters of concerns by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 & 5.

Cathleen SEKWAO [née MCHUNO] is our January 2021 Alumna, and her great stories begin here!

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