‘HEROINES of HEALTH’

celebrating women in global health

SUNDAY, MAY 21
INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

#WomenInGH
Dr. Aula Abbara
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Greece

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Refugee health

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
12

ABOUT HER WORK
Aula is the project lead for Greece for the Syrian American Medical Society Global Response. They provide primary healthcare to refugees in Northern Greece, such as pediatric and maternal health, with the Greek authorities and INGOs. With the Syrian American Medical Society, she teaches Syrian healthcare workers in Turkey on topics related to infectious diseases. She is on the committee for the Global Health Curriculum Group which aims to encourage the including of global health competencies in post graduate training curricula and is on the Syria Public Health Network’s steering committee. She is a full time clinician specializing in infectious diseases and doing research on TB in London.

THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE SHE OVERCAME
“It was a natural process. Since I was a medical student, I was always interested in working with vulnerable communities. During medical school, I spent my elective working near the Thai-Burmese border and in refugee camps in Lebanon which showed me first hand the gaps in healthcare and how vulnerable people could be, particularly those who have been forced from their homes. I have been driven by a sense of injustice at their plight and that entitlement to healthcare should be a given to everyone.”
Dr. Sharmila Anand
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in India

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Increasing confidence/position of women in the workforce

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
Sharmila leads SEHPL, a social enterprise focused on developing the next generation of healthcare professionals and leaders who can transform the way healthcare is delivered in India. She works on various initiatives that largely focus on enhancing skills of people in healthcare at various levels.

THE TOUGhest CHALLENGE SHE OVERCAME
“Standing up and believing in myself has been the toughest challenge I have faced. I just have to keep standing up every day and practicing it for 365 days and then keep reminding myself it's a long-distance journey. It's not about me, it's about the hope that I have helped build in the young women across the areas that I have worked – including my daughter. If I don’t stand up, how can I inspire them to believe and practice?”
Kwanele Asante
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in South Africa

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Healthcare workforce; reproductive rights; women in healthcare

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
Patient activist, lawyer and bioethicist, Kwanele serves as Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Cancer and has founded and led an effort to end disparities in global cancer.

HER INSPIRATION FOR GETTING INVOLVED
Kwanele’s own breast cancer diagnosis led her to see the disparities in South African private and public healthcare which inspired her to tackle the problem.
Mwanamvua Boga
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Kenya

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Healthcare workforce; maternal and infant care

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
Mwanamvua is a nurse manager working with the Kenya Medical Research Institute’s Welcome Trust Research Programme (KEMRI-WTRP) in Kilifi on the Kenyan coast. She works in an extremely busy pediatric unit at the Kilifi County Hospital that provides clinical care and conducts medical research on tropical diseases. The unit admits children ages 1-12 with various conditions, including babies born prematurely, meningitis, severe malaria, sepsis, severe pneumonia and cancer.

THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE SHE OVERCAME
“The hardest part of my job has been balancing my primary responsibilities as a nurse manager and running training with being a wife and mother. It can be overwhelming, but thanks to the immense support and encouragement from my colleagues and family, I have managed. I also practice the skills I teach about managing emotions – when I feel overwhelmed balancing my responsibilities, I recognize how I feel. I take a step back from my emotions and reflect – and then strategize. I have the confidence that I do a good job and I just need to handle my emotions consciously, especially when I am tired or stressed.”
Elvira SN. Dayrit
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Philippines

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Government health programs; immunization; maternal and infant care

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
27

ABOUT HER WORK
Elvira has a long history of working with healthcare in government. More recently, she has been refining Human Resources for the Health Country Masterplan and streamlining the Resource Development Bureau.

THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE SHE EVER RECEIVED
“A congressman told me that if we don’t use government funds for health programs, someone will just have a nicely paved walkway to his house. I had to make sure services reach the ones it should.”
ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Reproductive rights; improvements in maternal and newborn health; implementation research; neglected tropical diseases

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
Professor Gyapong (left in photo) is a medical anthropologist at the University of Health and Allied Sciences in Ghana. Until March 2017, she was Deputy Director for R&D in the Ghana Health Service.

THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE SHE OVERCAME
When Professor Gyapong was appointed Director of Dodowa Health Research, there was no research center and she wanted to prove that a female non-medic in the Ministry of Health could turn a small research office into an institution of international repute.
Emmah Kariuki
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Kenya

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Health workforce; maternal and infant care; reproductive health

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
As a member of the Jhpiego team, Emmah works to bring low cost health innovations to communities that are completely disadvantaged. Her work entails providing technical support for service delivery in family planning and reproductive health. Emmah provides training to health care providers, develops training materials, coordinates research activities and supports the Ministry of Health in the implementation of family planning and reproductive activities.

HER INSPIRATION FOR GETTING INVOLVED
“I always told my mother I wanted to become a nurse to care for patients and train other healthcare workers to improve quality of care. When I was a senior in high school, I suffered from menorrhagia (prolonged menstruation), and the hospital nurse told me I wasn’t sick. I went back to school without a cause of my pain and continued bleeding. By the time I finished my exams, I was anemic and needed a blood transfusion. It was at that moment that I knew I must become a nurse so I could ensure that no other girl would suffer like I did. Today, I am living my childhood dream.”
Samalie Kitooleko
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Uganda

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Young women’s health

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
Samalie is the nurse in charge of the Uganda Rheumatic Heart Disease Registry. At the Uganda Heart Institute, she takes care of patients with chronic cardiovascular illnesses such as congenital heart disease, myocardial infarction and rheumatic heart disease (RHD). Samalie realized increasing numbers of RHD patients (especially young women) lacked knowledge about their illness and were dying due to preventable complications, which is one of main reasons why she is a champion for patient education.

HER INSPIRATION FOR GETTING INVOLVED
“It started when I nursed a young female university student who had RHD. She became pregnant and defaulted treatment due to lack of enough medical advice and support. This led to her developing valve thrombosis and died the day of her graduation. I realized this was partly due to knowledge deficit as she was not well informed about the lifestyle while on Warfarin. This prompted me to start counseling young women intending to undergo mechanical valve replacement when they’re admitted to hospital. When I started working with the RHD registry in 2013, the database gave me a greater opportunity to reach out to all of them.”
Dr. Louise Mannheimer
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Sweden

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Young women’s health; healthcare policy; sexual and reproductive health

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
Louise currently serves as the head of the Sexual Health unit at the Swedish Public Health Agency and is responsible for the national coordination of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Sweden. Within the SRHR realm, she focuses on HIV prevention in young adults, LGBT rights and male violence against women. In her leadership role, Louise builds and implements the evidence to bridge the gap between research and practice.

HER INSPIRATION FOR GETTING INVOLVED
“I wanted to highlight the crucial importance of recognizing human rights – the right to non-discrimination, the pursuance of health and gender equality in health and recognition of cross-cutting actions, building governance and capacity for intersectoral action within SRHR and HIV prevention.”
Mercy Owuor
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Kenya

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Improvements in maternal and newborn health

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
Mercy is the Community Programs Director for the Lwala Community Alliance where she provides leadership for community programs including efforts to improve maternal and child health, adolescent sexual and reproductive health and HIV care and treatment and stigma reduction. She also works to build the self-agency of young adolescent girls through mentorship and economic empowerment to increase household incomes, as well as increasing access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities through education and support.

THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE SHE EVER RECEIVED
“Stand up for what you believe in because by doing that, you can create a lasting change. Do not let other people determine who you become or what you can do. As long as you have the will and the passion to drive the change you want to see, go for it and it will manifest.”
Dr. Semakaleng Phafoli
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Lesotho

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Healthcare workforce; maternal and infant care; young women’s health

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
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ABOUT HER WORK
Semakaleng is a Senior Nursing and Midwifery Technical Advisor supporting Jhpiego’s mission of working with the Ministry of Health, the Christian Health Association of Lesotho and the Lesotho Nursing Council to scale up VMMC services for HIV prevention while continuing to strengthen nursing pre-service education. She works with six nursing and midwifery training institutions in Lesotho to strengthen Primary Health Care (PHC) clinical placements to ensure nurses and midwives graduate with appropriate skills that address the country’s health priorities, including managing HIV/AIDS and TB and improving maternal and newborn health.

THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE SHE EVER RECEIVED
“I was told by Jhpiego’s CEO: If you do not have a seat, bring your own. This struck a chord for me – I am a woman, and women’s rights are not respected in many societies, especially nurses and midwives. Their voices are rarely heard and are often missing from key decision making forums. It is up to us as women – as nurses and midwives – to ensure we stand up for ourselves and for the many voiceless women and girls out there.”
Rohani Dg Te’ne

‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Indonesia

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Young Women’s Health; maternal and infant care

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
20+

ABOUT HER WORK
Mrs. Rohani is a volunteer community health motivator for Tamaona Community Health Center. She lives in the very rural area of Pao in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, which is not accessible by car or motorcycle. She escorts local villagers in need of healthcare, especially pregnant women, to the community health center. To get there, they must travel through difficult terrain which can take more than one hour by foot over bamboo bridges, forest and padi fields.

THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE SHE OVERCAME
“The most challenging situations I have faced have been during maternal emergencies. It’s dark and there is no transportation, so we need to carry the mother with the bamboo traditional ambulance, walking down the hill for more than one hour. These are the times when I worry the most that we will not be able to save a mother’s life.”
Sreytouch Vong
‘HEROINE of HEALTH’ in Cambodia

ISSUES SHE’S FOCUSED ON
Health workforce; increasing the position and confidence of women in healthcare roles

YEARS WORKING IN GLOBAL HEALTH
12

ABOUT HER WORK
Sreytouch is a research fellow, affiliated with ReBUILD and RinG consortium. She has worked with health financing, gender and human resource and nutrition. She is also engaging in the research uptake initiation to form a group of health researchers in Cambodia.

HER INSPIRATION FOR GETTING INVOLVED
“I am motivated by my wish to have a good health system which provides good service for all people. I want all people to be able to have good quality care and basic healthcare, including my family, my community, the poor who can’t afford to pay for healthcare and even me.”