

## Mr Wadebho William Alimani

An honorary award of a Doctor of Dental Science (honoris causa) was conferred upon William Alimani by Presiding Pro-Chancellor Mrs Dorothy Hoddinott AO at a Faculty of Medicine and Health graduation at 2.00pm on 15 March 2019.

### Citation

Presiding Pro-Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Mr Wadebho William Alimani to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Dental Science (honoris causa).

William was born in 1955 in a small village called Ekanga in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, near the Uganda and South Sudan borders.

Due to family poverty and no school in the village, William did not start school until he was nine years old after a school opened in a village 10 kms away. William spent four years walking to the French speaking school each day before an uncle took him to live with him in Uganda to study in the English system there.

In Uganda, William spent four further years in Primary School and finished Secondary School at age 18. During that time, Idi Amin came to power and his brutality was causing immense social problems. So much so that in 1979, at 21, William had to flee back to the relative security of Congo which was at the time being ruled by the dictator Mobutu. Returning to his village, he spent the next six years growing vegetables in the family field.

Health care, along with education, fell to the responsibility of the many local churches and in 1984, a pastor came to take over the small Anglican church in Ekanga. Pastor Aboni who came from a town with basic hospital, was appalled at the health needs he saw in Ekanga and had a vision to start a health centre there.

The struggling Church asked for help and an English nurse arrived to begin a nursing school in the region. She visited William's village of Ekanga in 1985 and following aptitude testing; William, at age 30, was selected for training. Following his graduation in 1987, William returned to Ekanga to become the first nurse in the area. He subsequently initiated a health centre with two midwives.

Two years later, he was selected to travel to Butembo, 600 kms away, to begin dental training with a Sydney University trained dentist, Dr Graham Toulmin. William spent three years training in an apprenticeship with Dr Toulmin until he and his family were forced to return to Australia due to the unrest and disorder that led to the overthrow of the Mobutu Government.

William took over the leadership role in the dental clinic and for eight years during the two Congo wars in which five million people died, he managed to keep the clinic afloat and all the Australian-sponsored equipment safe from the looting that was taking place during that turbulent time.

In 2004 William and his family returned to their home village. With Australian assistance, he was able to open another dental clinic at which he laboured faithfully until, again with Australian assistance, in 2015, a dental training school was instituted nearby. William had a leading role in the establishment of that teaching program.

For over 30 years, William has carried out the work of a Dental Surgeon with competence, compassion and humility. He is the leading oral surgeon in the eastern side of the Democratic Republic of Congo and has served with no other qualifications than a nursing certificate and three years of dental training in situ from a Sydney University graduate.

William has dealt with and managed medical and dental conditions far beyond the expectations of a dental degree and has made a significant contribution to dental health in a truly needy nation, the size of western Europe and with a population of over 80 million.

Presiding Pro-Chancellor, I present Mr Wadebho William Alimani for admission to the degree of Doctor of Dental Science (honoris causa) and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.