

# Empower communities, Unam urged

## ... 279 graduate from Katima Mulilo campus

• **LUGERETZIA KOOPER**

HIGHER education minister Itah Kandjii-Murangi has urged universities in the country to be relevant, and to empower communities with the necessary knowledge for life in modern times.

Kandjii-Murangi made this call at the 2019 University of Namibia graduation ceremony at the Katima Mulilo campus.

A total of 279 students graduated from various faculties, including education, agriculture, economics and humanities.

The minister said the level of trust and confidence the people have shown in the Katima Mulilo campus is captivating and encouraging.

"I understand that lecturers from the department of educational foundation and management more often offer professional development training to principals and junior primary teachers in the Zambezi region," Kandjii-Murangi added.

The minister said the department of wildlife management and eco-tourism had also become a beacon of reckoning with the environment ministry because of the free service they offer the community conservancies in the region.

"Livestock farmers in the region are grateful to the department of animal health because of the support they continue to receive from students in treating and vaccinating their animals at no cost to them," she continued.

Kandjii-Murangi, however, said funding constraints for higher education remains a challenge, and universities need to be innovative and explore all possible avenues to access the extra resources.

"In this regard, the government commends Unam for the partnerships that have led to the expansion of academic programmes and infrastructure, as well as knowledge transfer. We would further encourage Unam to double their efforts in the area of own resource mobilisation through research and in-

dustry collaborations," she advised. Unam chancellor Nangolo Mbumba said in a speech read on his behalf by vice chancellor Kenneth Matengu that the university mounted aggressive awareness campaigns to market the campus in and outside the region.

"It is good to note that these campaigns and other efforts have paid dividends. Today, the campus boasts of over 1 900 students who are enrolled, making it the fourth-largest of the 12 Unam campuses country-wide," Mbumba said.

Despite its remote geographical location, the campus continues to attract students from all other regions, and even outside the country.

"For instance, out of the 665 first-year students registered for 2019, over 200 are from outside the Zambezi region," the chancellor said.

There were 94 (63 academics and 31 administrative) full-time staff members at this campus this year.

"It is worth mentioning that 19 of the 63 academics on this campus hold doctoral qualifications, while 25 of them have master's degrees," he added.

Mbumba noted that he takes pride in the sustained high pass and progression rates of students at the Katima Mulilo campus, despite its limited resources.

The campus has maintained a student pass rate of 80% and above since its inception in 2011.

Another strength was the unparalleled success in research work, where the academic staff published 20 referenced journal articles, three conference papers and one book in 2018.

"These accomplishments are attributed to the commitment of the academic staff members who religiously followed the campus' five-year research agenda which lapsed in December 2018.

"I am reliably informed that a new research agenda that runs from January 2019 to December 2024 is already in place, and is being implemented," Mbumba added.