

Doctorates empower women - Pohamba

■ **ELVIS MURARANGANDA**

The former Head of State says that he has conferred honorary doctorates on two of the country's most prominent women, while speaking of how their achievements are inspiring and empowering others.

Former President and University of Namibia Chancellor Hifikepune Pohamba says the awarding of honorary doctorate degrees to two leading female figures is a bonus to women empowerment.

Pohamba said this at the conferring of honorary doctoral degrees to Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila and businesswoman Martha Namundjebo-Tilahun.

Kuugongelwa-Amadhila was awarded an honorary doctorate in public finance, while Namundjebo-Tilahun was awarded one in business administration at a special graduation ceremony.

"This graduation could not have come at a better time because for very long, women have been under-represented in terms of higher education and leadership," said Pohamba, who conferred the doctorates.



HONOURED: Businesswoman Martha Namundjebo-Tilahun.
PHOTOS: ELVIS MURARANGANDA

He said the Swapo-led government has spearheaded the equal representation of women at a legislative level. He added that it a great accomplishment for Unam giving doctorates to Kuugongelwa-Amadhila and Namundjebo-Tilahun.

"Just earlier this year, during our graduation ceremony, we graduated a team of six women with PhDs in various fields. There were no men."

According to Pohamba this is a sign that women are working hard to be breadwinners and contribute to the



ICON: Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila.

country "like any other individuals".

"When considering the gender roles women are expected to fulfil at home, their victory is more remarkable than any man."

Pohamba said that beyond their formal education, Kuugongelwa-Amadhila and Namundjebo-Tilahun have excelled in the "University of Life".

"We recognise such, and we applaud them for their hard work, and selfless contribution to Namibia."

The honorary doctorate is the highest award that the university confers and it is given to honour individuals

who have distinguished themselves through extraordinary achievements in scholarship, their professions or other creative activities.

This is irrespective of whether such achievements are widely known by the general public or not.

"It is also conferred to honour alumni and other individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the welfare and development of the university or the communities of which they are a part," Pohamba said.

These honorary qualifications are also given to recognise exceptional acts of philanthropy to the university. The honour is also meant to elevate the university in the eyes of the world by, honouring individuals who are widely known and highly regarded for achievements in their respective fields of endeavour.

Namundjebo-Tilahun in her acceptance speech dedicated her honorary doctorate to the African girl child.

She said the African girl child needs all types of inspiration in order to play a meaningful role in the development of the continent and humanity in general.

"My own upbringing and background in the business are indicative of what an African girl child can achieve when given an opportunity to believe in and chase her dreams," said Namundjebo-Tilahun.

"While I grew up in a society which did not recognise the equality of potential in both boys and girls, I was

fortunate to have benefited from parents who believed in such equality."

She said due to her parents beliefs, they allowed and supported her to get the same education that her brothers had access to.

"I believe given the necessary support the African girl child can become a strong instrument for economic emancipation of our continent."

Namundjebo-Tilahun believes that the continent's true economic development cannot accelerate in a manner that can achieve the speedy eradication of poverty, unless the empowering the girl child and African women are placed at the centre.

Kuugongelwa-Amadhila indicated that she is accepting the award on behalf of all Namibians, who are making a contribution to building a knowledge-based, democratic and prosperous country.

She then said it is imperative for Unam to produce knowledge and skills that are able to meet the human resources capital requirements of the country.

"Economic empowerment is better achieved when people are skilled. Social development and good health is better achieved when are informed, can read, write, comprehend complicated modern phenomena and are empowered," said Kuugongelwa-Amadhila.

She added that Namibia desperately needs more businesswomen of the calibre of Namundjebo-Tilahun.