

COMMONWEALTH NURSES FEDERATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2003/2004

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth Nurses Federation (CNF) is a strong, credible and participatory grouping of national nurses associations from Commonwealth countries. As one of the most active Commonwealth professional associations the CNF aims to influence health policy, develop nursing networks, improve nursing standards and strengthen nursing leadership throughout the Commonwealth.

2. MEMBERSHIP

At successive Biennial Meetings in 2001 and 2003 the CNF undertook to waive arrears of subscriptions for those associations with significant arrears subject to the payment of future subscriptions on schedule. As a result the CNF was delighted to welcome the Grenada Nurses Association, the National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives and the St Kitts Nurses Association back into active membership in 2003/2004.

3. BOARD MEMBERS

In April 2004 Mrs Reena Bose, President of the CNF, was a special guest at the 4th National Holistic Health Care Conference for Nursing Professionals at Shantivan, India, which was on the theme "*The Heart of Healing*". She spoke about the work of the CNF and presented a technical paper on hospital infection control.

Mrs Philda Nzimande, Board Member for the East, Central and Southern African region, participated in the CNF/Commonwealth Steering Committee Workshop on *Improved care through increased appreciation of patients' and health care professionals' needs* held in Kampala, Uganda in February 2004 (see Section 6).

Ms Corinne Scicluna, Board Member for the European region, chaired the CNF regional Conference held in St Julian's, Malta in March 2004. The theme of the Conference was *A Commonwealth of nations – the Commonwealth for nurses across borders* (see Section 14).

4. OFFICERS

The Executive Secretary, Mr Michael Stubbings, represented the CNF at the following international meetings:

- Civil Society Meeting with Senior Government Officials, Commonwealth Foundation, London, November 2003
- Launch of Report on Palliative Care in Sub-Saharan Africa, Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, London, November 2003
- Meeting with Commonwealth Associations on Funding Policy and Relationships, Commonwealth Foundation, London, February 2004 (see Section 12)
- Commonwealth Health Ministers Pre-WHA Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, May 2004 (see Section 8).

He also attended the following meetings in London:

- a meeting of the reconstituted Commonwealth HIV and AIDS Action Group and two meetings of its Steering Committee (see Section 10)
- an informal meeting with Dr Sam Thorpe, Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth Dental Association.
- a meeting with visiting officials from the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa

- a meeting with Ms Susie Kong, the Executive Director of the Singapore Nurses Association
- a meeting with Ms Mariama Sumani, the Chief Nursing Officer of Ghana

The Executive Secretary attended an Observance for Commonwealth Day at Westminster Abbey on 8 March 2004. On the same evening he and his wife went to a reception at Marlborough House, London, which was attended by Her Majesty the Queen and other members of the Royal Family.

6. COMMONWEALTH STEERING COMMITTEE FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

The CNF continued to be involved extensively in the work of the Steering Committee. This Committee receives minimal funding and has no real staff resources. It functions principally through the good offices of Committee members with the support of their employing organisations. The work programme of the Committee includes the publication of guidance on key issues and the arrangement of workshops.

A workshop was held in Christchurch, New Zealand in July 2003 on the theme *Human resources issues affecting nurses and midwives*. The workshop attracted over 65 delegates representing 7 countries in the region.

The workshop provided the opportunity to consider the practical implications of some of the Committee's previously issued guidance and resource materials. Subjects addressed included recruitment and retention, improving working lives, perceptions of nursing and midwifery as a career, attracting back former staff, flexible/family friendly working and violence towards staff.

A further workshop was held in Kampala, Uganda in February 2004. This workshop, which was opened by Brigadier Jim Muwhezi, the Ugandan Minister of Health, attracted around 250 participants including a large turnout of local nurses. The theme of this was *Improved care through increased appreciation of patients' and health care professionals' needs*.

Human resources sessions dealt with recruitment and retention of staff, perceptions of nursing and midwifery in career terms, attracting back former staff, flexible and family friendly working and violence towards staff. Sessions on HIV/AIDS covered the psychosocial needs of nurses, midwives, families and other carers.

At the end of both workshops delegates were provided with action plan sheets to record the key lessons learnt and their proposals for putting these into practice on their return home.

In February 2004 the Committee issued *Widening horizons: advice and information to assist Commonwealth nurses and midwives in making the most of international resources and opportunities*.

7. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT OF HEALTH WORKERS

The Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers and the Companion Document to the Code were adopted at the Pre-WHA Meeting of Commonwealth Health Ministers in Geneva, Switzerland in May 2003. 21 countries accepted and endorsed the Code at that meeting.

The Code is based on Commonwealth values of mutual support and fairness and provides a framework for interaction between countries with a view to meeting the health needs of their populations. It also covers such matters as compensation, selection procedures for recruits and workforce planning. The Companion Document supports the Code with further information on the definition of the terms used in the Code and more detailed explanations of the concepts.

The CNF was consulted on and made an input to both documents. It is hoped that the documents will prove helpful in raising awareness and promoting collaboration with governments, agencies, health workers etc on the important issue of recruitment and retention.

The texts of the Code and Companion Document were circulated to national nurses associations in September 2003. A composite version was also published by the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2003.

8. PRE-WHA MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTERS

In May 2004 Commonwealth Health Ministers held their usual meeting in Geneva, Switzerland prior to the World Health Assembly. The theme of the meeting was *“Improving maternal mortality: from knowledge to action”*. Issues considered at roundtable sessions on maternal health included political will, strengthening the National Health Information System and socio-cultural barriers to women’s health. The CNF representatives, the Executive Secretary and Ms Caroline Hyde-Price, Head of International Affairs, Royal College of Nursing, UK participated in these sessions.

Ministers observed that the Millennium Development Goal aimed at reducing maternal mortality by 75 per cent by 2015 could not be achieved without the renewed and full commitment of governments and called for the strengthening of partnerships between governments, local communities, civil society, the private sector and the international community. Ministers requested the Commonwealth Secretariat to work with member countries to collect and share best practices on maternal and child health programmes.

Ministers also considered papers on human resources for health, HIV/AIDS, the Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery and the work of NGOs.

9. ACCREDITATION TO THE COMMONWEALTH

In December 2003 the CNF applied to the Commonwealth Secretariat for accreditation to the Commonwealth under a new system for NGOs. This was needed to maintain access to the Commonwealth Secretariat’s staff and resources and intergovernmental meetings. In April 2004 the CNF was approved by the Secretariat as a Commonwealth Civil Society Organisation.

10. COMMONWEALTH HIV AND AIDS ACTION GROUP

In 2000 a number of Commonwealth non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the CNF, and some other organisations, which were all deeply concerned about the HIV/AIDS situation, formed the Para55 Group to promote and monitor the implementation of Para55 of the 1999 Durban Communiqué.

Following an extensive review the Para 55 Group was reconstituted as the Commonwealth HIV and AIDS Action Group. The Action Group was re-launched at a meeting in London in February 2004. Firm support for the aims of the Group was given by the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Discussions took place on the future work of the Group. Important presentations were also made on Gender and HIV/AIDS initiatives. Work also got under way to hold an event in London on World AIDS Day (December 2004) and to open a new Website.

In February a new Steering Committee comprising five UK based NGO representatives and four “virtual” representatives from developing countries met for the first time. The Steering Committee’s work is involved in developing strategic objectives and project proposals, considering co-ordinated activities with other bodies and managing funding, publications and the website arrangements.

Dr Nthabiseng Phaladze, a nurse lecturer nominated by the Nurses Association of Botswana, and the Executive Secretary represent the CNF on the Steering Committee. The Executive Secretary was also appointed as the Action Group’s Treasurer.

11. COMMONWEALTH FELLOWSHIP

Following a review by the Commonwealth Foundation in early 2003 the Commonwealth Fellowship Scheme was discontinued.

12. RELATIONS WITH THE COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION AND FUNDING POLICY

During the year the CNF was engaged in consultations with the Commonwealth Foundation about future relations between the Foundation and civil society organisations (CSOs) and the important issue of core and activity funding for CSOs. The Executive Secretary was interviewed by the Foundation’s consultant, prepared a written submission to the Foundation and attended a meeting in February 2004,

at which CSOs and the Foundation discussed future policy proposals. As a result new funding policy guidelines will be introduced for the financial year 2004-2005.

13. FINANCE

The Commonwealth Foundation again gave considerable support to the CNF, which is gratefully acknowledged. This comprised two elements - a core grant of £12,400 towards the CNF's basic operating costs and £7,000 to assist the attendance of nurses and midwives at two regional workshops and a conference. These were the Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF Workshop held in Christchurch, New Zealand in July 2003, the Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF Workshop held in Kampala, Uganda in February 2004 and the CNF European Conference held in St Julian's, Malta in March 2004 (see Sections 6 and 14).

Subscription income for the year totalled £8,884. Subscription rates remained unchanged.

At the Biennial Meeting in 2003 it was agreed that the CNF should set aside £1,000 annually as a Contingency Fund for use on application by member associations in emergency situations having a direct bearing on peoples' health. In February 2004 the first award from this Fund (£500) was made to the Niue Island Relief Fund organised by the New Zealand Nurses Organisation.

14. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

A Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF workshop was held in Christchurch, New Zealand in July 2003 on the theme *Human resources issues affecting nurses and midwives*. The workshop attracted over 65 delegates representing 7 countries in the region (see Section 6).

A further Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF workshop was held in Kampala, Uganda in February 2004. This attracted around 250 participants including a large turnout of local nurses. The theme of this was *Improved care through increased appreciation of patients' and health care professionals' needs*. (See Section 6).

The Fifth CNF European Regional Conference was held in St Julian's, Malta, 25-27 March. The theme of the Conference was *A Commonwealth of nations – the Commonwealth for nurses across borders*. The Conference was organised on behalf of the CNF by the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses (MUMN) with the assistance of a Scientific Committee. It attracted over 540 delegates, principally from the three Commonwealth member countries in the region – Cyprus, Malta and the United Kingdom. Dr Luis Deguara, Malta's Minister of Health, delivered a keynote address about the Commonwealth and nursing within the Commonwealth.

15. CNF WEBSITE

Development of the CNF website, which was opened in October 2002, continued during the year. Work commenced on the inclusion on the site of the various guidance materials issued by the Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery. The address of the site is www.commonwealthnurses.org

During the year there were around 2500 visits to the site, a good return for a relatively small site.

16. PUBLICATIONS

The following publications were produced and distributed during the year:

1. Issues 31 and 32 of the CNF Newsletter.
2. Directory of Commonwealth Nursing and Midwifery Associations and Chief Nursing Officers, 2004.

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