

# **COMMONWEALTH NURSES FEDERATION**



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2004/2005**

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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. During the year the Tonga Nurses Association returned to active membership after a long absence. However, the New Zealand Nurses Organisation again withdrew from membership at the end of 2003/04 despite the fact that concerted efforts were made to reverse the decision.

### 3. GOVERNING BOARD

Elections for certain regional Board members resulted as follows:

Africa, East, Central & Southern – Mr Donald Epaalat (Kenya), elected to replace Mrs Philda Nzimande (South Africa).

Africa, West – Mrs Alice Asare-Allotey (Ghana), elected to replace Mrs Emma Banga (Ghana).

Atlantic – Mrs Marion Howard (Barbados), elected to replace Mrs Lynda Kushnir Pekarul (Canada)

Pacific – Mrs Alumita Bulicokocoko (Fiji), elected for a second term.

Board members serve for an initial period of four years but are eligible to serve for two additional terms subject to election. See also Section 15 – Biennial Meeting.

### 4. BOARD MEMBERS

Following the tsunami disaster in December 2004 Mrs Reena Bose, President of the CNF, was involved in immediate relief work in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which were particularly badly hit.

In March 2005 Mrs Reena Bose made a presentation at a Workshop, organised jointly by the CNF and the West African College of Nursing at Abuja, Nigeria on the theme *Strengthening the nursing and midwifery contribution in the management of HIV/AIDS*. (See Section 12).

Mrs Alumita Bulicokocoko, the Board Member for the Pacific region, made a presentation on the work of the CNF at the 12<sup>th</sup> South Pacific Nurses Forum (SPNF) held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in November 2004. The theme of the Forum was *Challenges and actions for nursing and nurses in the South Pacific*.

In September 2004 Ms Corinne Scicluna, the Board Member for the European region, participated in an International Nursing Conference in Gibraltar on the theme *Changing practice: changing care*.

### 5. OFFICERS

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

- Consultation Meeting for Health NGOs on the Commonwealth Health Ministers' Meeting, Commonwealth Secretariat, October 2004
- Civil Society Consultation Meeting on Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) Processes, Commonwealth Foundation, November 2004
- Consultation on Recruitment and Migration of the Highly Skilled, Commonwealth Secretariat, January 2005

He also attended the following meetings in London:

- a Seminar on CanSupport and its New Delhi hospice and day care centre, November 2004
- an AIDS Day Forum, Marlborough House, December 2004 (see Section 8)
- two meetings of the Steering Committee of the HIV/AIDS Action Group (see Section 8)
- meetings with the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association, the Commonwealth Dental Association and the Commonwealth HIV/AIDS Action Group to progress a combined NGO event at CHOGM, November 2005
- a meeting with Ms Susie Kong, the Executive Director of the Singapore Nurses Association

The Executive Secretary attended an Observance for Commonwealth Day at Westminster Abbey on 14 March 2005. 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**

As usual the CNF was heavily involved in all 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.

In 2004 the Committee issued a publication entitled *Enhancing women's contribution to public health – a resource for Commonwealth nurses and midwives*. Copies were distributed to Commonwealth Chief Nursing Officers and Presidents of national nursing associations.

A successful workshop was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 7/8 February 2005 in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster. The Hon Nimal Siripala de Silva MP, Minister of Health, gave an opening address. Around 100 nurses and midwives from four countries participated in the event.

The theme of the workshop was *Enhancing women's contribution to public health -reducing child mortality/improving maternal health*. However, speakers adapted their presentations as appropriate in order to be sensitive to the situation following the tsunami. Sessions covered why women's contribution to public health matters, what women add and examples of benefits; enhancing that contribution, the obstacles and how to tackle them; success in reducing child mortality; and the challenges of improving maternal health.

In addition to the issue of action plan sheets, for the first time a nominated representative from each country's delegation to the workshops was given an evaluation questionnaire to complete and return four months after the event.

## **7. PRE-WHA MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTERS**

In May 2005 Commonwealth Health Ministers held their usual meeting in Geneva, Switzerland prior to the World Health Assembly. The theme was again related to maternal health. Roundtable sessions were held.

Ministers undertook to address maternal, neonatal and child health as a public priority by strengthening the capacities of health care delivery systems to make them more responsive to those in need. In a message addressed to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Malta in November 2005 the Ministers pointed out that the risk of death in pregnancy was far greater in developing countries than in developed countries, that this was one of the public health disparities in the world and that it constituted a global tragedy that required urgent action.

A Communique on the health care skills drain had been sent to Health Ministers by a number of NGOs. This had included points on the need for self-sufficiency of countries in terms of their health workforce; the need for developed countries to help developing countries to expand capacity; and the need for education, funding and support for health workers. The CNF had been involved in this exercise. The Communique was flagged up at the meeting and the subject of managing human resources for health was identified as an issue, which Ministers needed to address in the coming year.

Ministers noted that the provision of increased services would require adequate human resources and expressed concern about the impact on health services of the migration of health professionals. They urged developed and developing countries to work together to find appropriate mechanisms to support human resource development for health.

The Ministers concluded their meeting by reaffirming that the Millennium Development Goals could only be achieved with the full commitment and leadership of governments, and by the mobilisation of required domestic and international resources, as well as strengthened partnerships among governments, civil society organisations, the private sector and the international community. Howard Catton, Head of Policy Development and Implementation, Royal College of Nursing, UK represented the CNF at the meeting.

## **8. 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 in 2004 as the Commonwealth HIV and AIDS Action Group. The Group continues to focus on a multi-sectoral approach to combating HIV/AIDS. This involves advocacy, expert meetings and information sharing with NGOs and grassroots communities.

To facilitate improved working a Steering Committee was formed comprising five UK based NGO representatives and four “virtual” representatives from developing countries, who make input principally by email.

Outputs from the Group during the year were:

- the launch of a new, more user friendly website – [www.para55.org](http://www.para55.org)
- a prominent Forum, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Secretariat, in London on World AIDS Day, in December 2004
- a joint advocacy meeting with the Commonwealth Lawyers Association in London in January 2005.

The theme of the AIDS Day Forum, at which the Deputy Secretary General, Mr Winston Cox, gave a keynote address, was *Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS*. Presentations covered mother to child transmission; women’s empowerment in the context of HIV/AIDS; and revisiting girls’ education in a world changed by HIV/AIDS. Over 70 persons attended including UK Members of Parliament, representatives from Commonwealth countries’ High Commissions in the UK and Commonwealth and international NGOs.

The advocacy meeting with the Commonwealth Lawyers Association addressed the questions posed by HIV in terms of the social consequences, the legal context and human rights. This attracted an audience of around 60 prominent people in the field concerned.

## **9. RELATIONS WITH THE COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION AND FUNDING POLICY**

Following consultations the Commonwealth Foundation’s new Funding Policy Guidelines entered into force for the year 2004/05. The maximum core funding permitted for each Commonwealth Association (CA) was reduced from £13,000 to £10,000 per annum and conditions for post event evaluation of activities were introduced. The ceiling level for a CA’s annual funding application remained at £20,000 per annum. The outcome was not entirely satisfactory but it was considered that it was the best that could have been achieved in the circumstances.

The outcome will obviously have an ongoing effect on the CNF’s finances.

## **10. FINANCE**

The Commonwealth Foundation again provided the CNF with considerable financial support under the new funding regime. This is gratefully acknowledged. The funding comprised two elements - a core grant of £10,000 towards the CNF's basic operating costs and £8,500 to assist the attendance of nurses and midwives at three regional workshops. These were the Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF Workshop held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in February 2005, the CNF/West African College of Nursing Workshop held in Abuja, Nigeria in March 2005 and the CNF Workshop held in Singapore in May 2005 (see Sections 6 and 12).

Subscription income for the year totalled £8,885. Subscription rates remained unchanged.

## **11. EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY FUND**

Member associations were advised in 2002 of the agreed introduction of the Emergency Contingency Fund from 1 October of that year. £1,000 is set aside annually and member associations can apply for funding to assist in emergency situations having a direct bearing on peoples' health (maximum £500 per event). Criteria for the Fund were approved by the Board.

At its last meeting in 2003 the Board agreed that the operation of the Fund should be reviewed at its next meeting in 2005. In February 2004 the CNF made the first grant from the Fund (£500) to a relief fund set up by the New Zealand Nurses Organisation to support nurses in Niue Island, which was devastated by a cyclone. A grant of £500 was also made in March 2005 to a fund set up by the Sri Lanka Nurses Association for the tsunami disaster.

## **12. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES**

A Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF workshop was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 7/8 February 2005 in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster. Around 100 nurses and midwives from four countries participated in the event. The theme of the workshops was *Enhancing women's contribution to public health - reducing child mortality/improving maternal health*. (See Section 6).

A CNF/West African College of Nursing (WACN) workshop was held in Abuja, Nigeria, 15/16 March 2005. The workshop comprised the WACN's 17<sup>th</sup> Scientific Session and was held in conjunction with its 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial General Meeting. The workshop was on the theme *Strengthening the nursing and midwifery contribution in the management of HIV/AIDS*. Sessions covered the impact and consequences of HIV/AIDS; global and regional perspectives; and prevention and care. A main outcome was that a committee would produce a booklet of guidelines for the care of people living with HIV/AIDS and associated issues. A nominated representative from each country's delegation to the workshop was given an evaluation questionnaire to complete and return four months after the event.

A CNF workshop was held in Singapore on 17/18 May in conjunction with its Biennial Meeting. This was on the theme *Seeking partnerships for nursing and midwifery development in the Commonwealth*. Presentations were made on a number of national, regional and international partnership initiatives. Groups queried some existing partnership arrangements, made suggestions for some possible future liaisons and identified a number of outstanding nursing issues.

## **13. WEBSITE**

The website [www.commonwealthnurses.org](http://www.commonwealthnurses.org), which has been running since October 2002, includes pages covering About the CNF, Strategies, Members, the Board and Officers, News, Commonwealth Day, the Newsletters, the Conference Calendar, Publications and the Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery. Work continued on including guidance materials produced by the Commonwealth Steering Committee. Improvements and additions are ongoing. There were around 3500 visits to the website during the year.

## 14. PUBLICATIONS

The 2004 Directory was published in hard copy and circulated to all national nurses associations and Chief Nursing Officers in June 2004. At the last meeting it was agreed that this publication should be placed on the CNF website. However, as the agreement of many of the national nursing associations and Chief Nursing Officers to do this could not be obtained, the idea was not proceeded with.

The following publications were produced and distributed during the year:

1. Issues 33 and 34 of the CNF Newsletter.
2. *A Commonwealth of nations – the Commonwealth for nurses across borders*. Papers from the Fifth European Regional Conference, St Julian's, Malta, March 2004.

## 15. BIENNIAL MEETING

The CNF held a very successful Biennial General Meeting and Workshop at Fort Canning Lodge, Singapore on 17-18 May. 70 delegates attended. For details of the Workshop see Section 12. A Board Meeting was held on 15/16 May.

The main outcomes from the Biennial Meeting were as follows:

- Ms Susie Kong (Singapore Nurses Association) was elected as the new President and Mrs Satish Chawla (Trained Nurses Association of India) was elected as the new Vice President.
- reports from the Executive Secretary and the Treasurer were adopted.
- membership subscriptions were increased for the first time in eleven years.
- an amended Constitution was adopted to replace the one agreed in Zimbabwe in 1995.
- new Strategic Directions agreed by the Board for the period 2006-2010, were noted and recommended to member associations for use in developing their operational plans and providing feedback to Board members.
- the contingency fund set up for member associations for use in emergency situations would be continued on the same conditions.
- the Directory of Commonwealth Nursing and Midwifery Associations and Chief Nursing Officers would be produced again in 2006.
- the CNF would hold a workshop on HIV/AIDS in conjunction with the South Pacific Nurses Forum in Samoa in 2006.

Votes of thanks were given to the outgoing Board members Mrs Reena Bose (President - 4 years), Ms Beulah Duke (Vice President - 8 years), Mrs Emma Banga (12 years), Mrs Philda Nzimande (8 years) and Mrs Lynda Kushnir Pekrul (4 years). New Board members Mrs Alice Asare-Allotey (Africa West), Mr Donald Epaalat (Africa East, Central and Southern) and Mrs Marion Howard (Atlantic) were introduced and welcomed.

July 2005