

COMMONWEALTH NURSES FEDERATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2005/2006

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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. The CNF was accredited to the Commonwealth in April 2004.

2. MEMBERSHIP

During the year the St Lucia Nurses Association returned to active membership after a long absence. In November 2005 the Zambia Nurses Association advised that they could not pay their subscriptions for 2004/05 and 2005/06 due to financial difficulties caused by a change of the Government payroll management system, which had resulted in a failure to deduct membership subscriptions from salaries. Efforts are being made to rectify the problem.

3. BOARD MEMBERS

In February 2006 President, Susie Kong, participated in workshops in Christ Church, Barbados organised by the Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery in conjunction with the CNF. The workshops covered strategies for human resources development and presentation, proposal writing and influencing skills. Marion Howard, the Board Member for the Atlantic region, also provided assistance as a resource person. (See Section 5).

In February 2006, during stop-offs before and after the workshops in Barbados, Ms Kong paid two visits to London. During these visits she, accompanied by the Executive Secretary, Michael Stubbings, had productive meetings with:

- Dula de Silva and Peggy Vidot of the Health Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat
- Mark Collins, Director, Commonwealth Foundation
- Representatives of the Royal College of Nursing, UK (RCN) - Beverly Malone, General Secretary, Alison Kitson, Executive Director - Nursing and Susan Williams, Head of International Affairs.

In May 2006 Ms Kong participated in the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (CHMM) in Geneva, Switzerland, which was on the theme *Human Resources for Health*. (See Section 7).

In November 2005 Corinne Ward, the Board Member for the European region, chaired a session at a Symposium at the Commonwealth Peoples Forum in Malta on 22 November prior to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The Symposium on *Global Health – Networking for Better Outcomes* was organised by the CNF, the Commonwealth Dental Association, the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association and the Commonwealth HIV/AIDS Action Group. (See Section 6).

4. OFFICERS

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

- Civil Society Consultation Meeting prior to CHOGM, Commonwealth Foundation/Secretariat, September 2005
- Workshop for World AIDS Day, Commonwealth Secretariat, December 2005
- Civil Society Consultation Meeting, Commonwealth Foundation/Secretariat, February 2006
- Consultation Meeting for Health NGOs prior to the CHMM on *Human Resources for Health*, Commonwealth Secretariat, April 2006 (see Section 7)
- Civil Society Consultation Meeting on Strengthening Development Co-operation, Commonwealth Foundation/Secretariat, May 2006

He also attended the following meetings in London:

- meetings with the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association, the Commonwealth Dental Association and the Commonwealth HIV/AIDS Action Group to arrange the combined NGO Symposium at CHOGM (see Section 6)
- a meeting with representatives of St Lucia Nurses Association, November 2005
- the Annual General Meeting of the HIV/AIDS Action Group, February 2006 (see Section 8)
- a meeting, hosted by RCN, with representatives of the Ghana Registered Nurses Association and the Sierra Leone Nurses Association, May 2006.

The Executive Secretary attended an Observance for Commonwealth Day at Westminster Abbey on 15 March 2006 and an evening reception at Marlborough House, London, which was attended by HRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall. He also acted as a helper at the annual Commonwealth Carol Service at St Martins-in-the-Fields Church in December 2005.

5. COMMONWEALTH STEERING COMMITTEE FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

Once again the CNF was involved in the work of the Steering Committee. This Committee receives minimal funding and has no direct staff resources. It functions principally through the good offices of Committee members with the support of their employers. The Committee is instrumental in publishing guidance and arranging workshops on key issues.

In December 2005 the Committee published a resource for Commonwealth nurses and midwives on *Positive change - the contribution of health care professionals to health care reform, policy and health systems*. This highlights and supports the contribution of nurses and midwives to health systems policy development, particularly in poorer countries. The material covers the main issues and includes examples of the experiences and resources, which can be used by nurses and midwives in preparing for and making a positive contribution to reform and health system development.

A successful workshop for nurses and midwives from the Atlantic region was held in Christ Church, Barbados on 13/14 February 2006. This was organised by the Committee in conjunction with the CNF. Around 90 delegates from the region attended. The Hon Dr Jerome Walcot, Minister of Health, Barbados, opened the workshop. President Susie Kong and Marion Howard, Board Member for the Atlantic region, also participated.

The workshops considered priorities and strategies for human resources development including improving working lives. Other sessions covered presentation, proposal writing and influencing skills. Delegates appreciated the practical contents of the workshops and were pleased to receive resource materials for use on their return home. Action plan sheets were issued and a nominated representative from each country's delegation was given an evaluation questionnaire to complete and return four months after the event. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation are thanked for providing funding assistance for these workshops.

6. COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING

The CNF, the Commonwealth Dental Association, the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association and the Commonwealth HIV/AIDS Action Group, joined by their common purpose to increase access to basic and essential health care, collaborated in the presentation of a successful Symposium for health care professionals at the Commonwealth Peoples Forum in Malta on 22 November 2005 prior to CHOGM. The theme of CHOGM was *Networking for Development*.

The Symposium, which provided impetus and direction for on-going dialogue and action, had the theme *Global Health – Networking for Better Outcomes* and dealt with the two most urgent issues impacting on development in the Commonwealth, HIV/AIDS and the migration of health care professionals. Winston Cox, Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth opened the Symposium. There were 180 delegates present, many from the local dental, medical, nursing and pharmaceutical associations. The CNF's European Board Member, Corinne Ward, chaired the afternoon session.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, Dr Alice Welbourn, Chair of the Board of Trustees, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, made a presentation on *Access to Treatment and Care*. Dr Richard Scheffer, Chair, Advocacy Committee, UK Forum for Hospice & Palliative Care Worldwide addressed the subject of *Palliative Care*. On migration, Professor Agyeman Akosa, President, Commonwealth Medical Association and Director General, Ministry of Health, Ghana, presented *A Developing World Perspective* and Professor Richard Cooper, Professor of Medicine, Leonard Davis Institute, University of Pennsylvania, USA considered *A Developed World Perspective*.

The organisations involved in the Symposium worked hard to help to get two recommendations inserted into a Statement to Commonwealth Foreign Ministers calling on Governments to:

1. ensure the human right to health care for all, devoting adequate resources to ensure universal, free and sustained quality access to treatment for all those infected by and affected by HIV/AIDS, especially women, children and older persons, and immediately substantially scale up international support for the treatment as well as prevention of HIV/AIDS;
2. advance agreement among Commonwealth governments on migration of health and education workers with the objectives of meeting national needs and self-sufficiency.

All the organisations involved work with their members at regional and national levels to focus attention on the need for continuing education and training of health care workers in the management and treatment of HIV/AIDS. They also work assiduously to raise awareness at global and national levels of the urgent need for improved collaboration between governments and the health care professions in the delivery of essential health care.

A summary report of the Symposium was presented to Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary General, at a workshop to mark World AIDS Day at Marlborough House, London on 1 December 2005.

7. PRE-WHA MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTERS

The annual Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (CHMM) was held in Geneva, Switzerland on 21 May 2006 with the theme "*Human Resources for Health*". A number of presentations were made on this important subject in plenary sessions and open debate took place in four roundtables.

Ministers at the meeting:

- noted the human resources constraints on health care
- endorsed an all-inclusive approach to health workforce policy development
- emphasised the importance of managing health worker migration issues
- underlined the need to build regional capacities for the training of health workers
- recognised that the Commonwealth has an important role in taking forward the recommendations of the 2006 World Health Report
- recommended that sufficient resources should be allocated to health at national level
- highlighted that international assistance programmes should not impose constraints on health workforce expansion.
- agreed to continue to work together for further implementation of the Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers.

In March the CNF sought information from member associations on current models of good practice or strategies covering the recruitment, retention and re-employment of nurses and midwives with a view to formulating a position on the subject in advance of the CHMM. The CNF then joined forces with five other health NGOs – Commonwealth Medical Association, Commonwealth Dental Association, Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association, British Medical Association and Royal College of Nursing, UK. As a result a joint paper on the Crisis in Human Resources for Health was submitted to the CHMM on 1 May. This included suggested strategies for investment in the health sector, workforce planning, codes of conduct for ethical international recruitment, raising motivation among health workers, maximising human resource potential, facilitating managed migration schemes, promoting link/exchange programmes and mobilising the resources in the health care diaspora.

Representatives from the six NGOs participated in the roundtables at the meeting. The CNF team consisted of President, Susie Kong, Executive Secretary, Michael Stubbings, President of RCN, Sylvia Denton, and RCN Head of International Affairs, Susan Williams.

8. COMMONWEALTH HIV AND AIDS ACTION GROUP

In 2000 a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the CNF, 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 Communique. The Group was reconstituted in 2004 as the Commonwealth HIV and AIDS Action Group. While it continues to focus on a multi-sectoral approach to combating HIV/AIDS, much of its work is now concerned with advocacy and information sharing. A Steering Committee was also formed to facilitate improved working.

The principal activity of the Action Group was its involvement on 22 November 2005 with the CNF, the Commonwealth Dental Association and the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association in the successful Symposium for health care professionals at the Commonwealth Peoples Forum in Malta on 22 November 2005 prior to CHOGM (see Section 6). This involved much planning and organisation.

The Action Group was also one of the partners in the organisation of the annual Commonwealth Carol Service at St Martin-in-the-Fields Church, Trafalgar Square, London on 14 December 2005. Michael Stubbings, Executive Secretary, acted as a helper at this event.

At the Annual General Meeting in February 2006 the Chair of the Group, Frank Davis, stood down after a successful term of three years, during which time he was much involved in advocacy work and strengthening the governance of the Group. New appointments were made as follows:

Chair - Dr Mandeep Dhaliwal, Senior Technical and Policy Advisor, International HIV/AIDS Alliance
Deputy Chair - Anton Kerr, Senior HIV Policy Advisor, Christian Aid.

Executive Secretary, Michael Stubbings, agreed to continue as Treasurer of the Group for a further year.

In May 2006 the Group submitted a paper to the CHMM on HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care which was linked to the question of the human resources crisis.

9. FINANCE

The Commonwealth Foundation again provided the CNF with financial support for its work and this is gratefully acknowledged. The funding comprised two elements - a core grant of £10,000 towards the CNF's basic operating costs and £4,000 to assist the attendance of nurses and midwives at the Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF Workshop held in Christ Church, Barbados in February 2006. (See Section 5).

Subscription income for the year totalled £8,610. As agreed at the Biennial Meeting in Singapore in May 2005, from 1 October 2005 subscription rates were increased for the first time since 1994 as follows:

Former Rate £	Increase	New Rate £
50	None	50
100	+25%	125
150	+25%	185
200	+25%	250
625	+25%	780
750	+25%	935
1000	+50%	1500
1500	+50%	2250

It was also agreed at the Biennial Meeting in 2005 that the lowest rate (£50) should be increased to £65 from 1 October 2006.

10. EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY FUND

The Emergency Contingency Fund was introduced on 1 October 2002. £1,000 is set aside annually. Member associations can apply for assistance for emergency situations having a direct bearing on peoples' health (maximum £500 per event). At the Biennial Meeting in Singapore in May 2005 it was agreed that the Fund should be continued under the same conditions. No grants were made from the Fund during the year.

11. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

A Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF workshop was held in Christ Church, Barbados on 13/14 February 2006. Around 90 nurses and midwives from the region attended. The workshop considered strategies for human resources development as well as presentation, proposal writing and influencing skills (see Section 5).

During the year teleconferences were held by the Organising Committee of the 6th CNF European Conference, which is due to be held at the RCN Headquarters in London in March 2007 with the theme *Commonwealth nurses advancing nursing care: collaboration in Europe*.

12. WEBSITE

The website www.commonwealthnurses.org 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. The site includes some of the guidance materials produced by the Steering Committee. There were around 6000 visits to the website during the year.

13. PUBLICATIONS

Issues Nos. 35 and 36 of the CNF Newsletter were published during the year. With the agreement of the President, Susie Kong, and excellent collaboration from the Singapore Nurses Association, Issue No. 36 (Spring 2006) was published and printed in Singapore in full colour at a considerable cost saving.

The proceedings of a Workshop, organised by the CNF and the West African College of Nursing and held in Abuja, Nigeria, 15-16 March 2005 on *Strengthening the nursing and midwifery contribution in the management of HIV/AIDS in the West African Region*, were published in December 2005.

The 2006 Directory of Commonwealth Nursing and Midwifery Associations and Chief Nursing Officers was published and circulated in June 2006. As the agreement of some national nursing associations and Chief Nursing Officers could not be obtained the Directory was not placed on the CNF website.

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