

COMMONWEALTH NURSES FEDERATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2006/2007

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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

The CNF waived the subscriptions of the Zambia Nurses Association for the years 2004/05 and 2005/06 because of financial difficulties experienced by the Association when the Government changed its payroll management system. This resulted in failure to deduct membership subscriptions from salaries and subsequent loss of revenue and membership. The Government facility has now been reinstated and membership is recovering steadily.

In October 2006 the Canadian Nurses Association notified its intention to terminate its membership of the CNF at the end of September 2007. The President, Susie Kong, and the Board Member for the Atlantic region, Marion Howard, wrote to the President of the CNA in January 2007 in an effort to persuade the CNA to reconsider its decision. Reasons put forward included the CNF's increased advocacy work at Ministerial meetings and maintaining relations with and helping member associations in developing countries in the Caribbean. Communications are continuing.

3. BOARD MEMBERS

In February 2007 President, Susie Kong, participated in regional workshops in Singapore organised by the Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery in conjunction with the CNF. The workshops provided an opportunity for nurses and midwives attending to learn about presentation, proposal writing and influencing skills and human resources aspects including improving working lives. (See Section 5).

Immediately after the Steering Committee workshops Ms Kong organised a further one day CNF workshop in Singapore for some of the nurses and midwives attending those workshops. This focused on the implementation and use of action plans based on the outcomes of the Steering Committee workshops. (See Section 11).

In August/September 2006, prior to the 13th South Pacific Nurses Forum (SPNF), Alumita Bulicokocoko, Board Member for the Pacific region, facilitated a joint CNF/SPNF regional workshop in Apia, Samoa on the theme *Strengthening the nursing and midwifery contribution in the management of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific*. (See Section 11).

In September 2006 Mrs Bulicokocoko also represented the CNF at the 13th SPNF in Apia, Samoa and gave an address to the meeting on the background and work programme of the CNF.

In March 2007 Corinne Ward, the Board Member for the European region, opened the 6th CNF European Conference in London, UK and gave a plenary address. The conference theme was *Commonwealth nurses advancing nursing care: collaboration in Europe*. (See Section 11).

4. OFFICERS

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

- Commonwealth Secretariat Consultation Meeting (October 2006) for Health NGOs on the theme of the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (CHMM), May 2007, *"Lifestyle diseases – health systems approaches"* (see Section 7)
- meetings early in 2007 with the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association, the Commonwealth Dental Association and the Commonwealth Medical Association (one also

- with the Commonwealth Foundation) on a proposed NGO Workshop at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, (CHOGM), November 2007 (see Section 6)
- teleconferences on the organisation of the 6th CNF European Conference (July 2006, January 2007, February 2007) (See Section 11)
 - a meeting with representatives of the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (August 2006)
 - a meeting with representatives of the Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (August 2006)
 - a meeting with the Executive Director of the Royal College of Nursing, Australia (November 2006)
 - a meeting with representatives from the Ugandan Ministry of Health and Nurses and Midwives Council (February 2007)
 - meetings of the Steering Committee of the HIV/AIDS Action Group (July and October 2006) (See Section 8)

The Executive Secretary attended an Observance for Commonwealth Day at Westminster Abbey on 12 March 2007.

5. COMMONWEALTH STEERING COMMITTEE FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

The CNF was again involved heavily 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 October 2006, the Steering Committee produced a further resource in its series entitled "*A better tart - improving maternal health and reducing infant and maternal mortality*". This was distributed to the Health Ministers, Chief Nursing Officers and Presidents of National Nursing Associations of all Commonwealth countries. The resource aims to support the nursing and midwifery contribution to the Millennium Development Goals on reducing child mortality and improving maternal health. The resource includes items such as the "TALC baby" model, the script of a play promoting ante-natal care, exercises, games and other training materials, as well as posters, and policy and guidance materials from a range of organisations and settings.

A successful workshop for nurses and midwives from the Pacific region was held in Singapore in February 2007. The workshops focused on improving working lives and on presentation, proposal writing and influencing skills. About 80 delegates, from Commonwealth countries in the region took part. President, Susie Kong assisted with the arrangements for the workshop.

The workshop sessions were conducted as informally as possible, with opportunities for participants to discuss issues in groups, as well as in the plenary sessions, and to practice skills taught. Delegates were encouraged to complete action plans at the end of the workshop to help them apply and share what they had learnt on return to their work places. They were also given copies of related Commonwealth and WHO resource materials. A nominated representative from each country's delegation was given an evaluation questionnaire to complete and return four months after the event.

Countries unable to send representatives were included in the distribution of the workshop report, including the presentations. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation are thanked for providing funding assistance for these workshops.

6. COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING

The Commonwealth Foundation has accepted a proposal for a health workshop involving the CNF at the Commonwealth Peoples Forum (CPF) before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kampala, Uganda in November 2007. Partner organisations with the CNF will be the Commonwealth Dental Association, the Commonwealth Medical Association, the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association and the charity Basic Needs. It is hoped that local associations of health professionals in Uganda, including the nurses and midwives association, will participate in this venture.

The theme of the CPF is *Realising peoples' potential*. The workshop will take place on 19/20 November and have the theme *Prioritise health – realise potential*. There will be five sub-themes – *human resources for health; maternal and child health; lifestyle diseases; safe health practices; and mental health and development*.

The workshop is seen as an important opportunity to lobby Commonwealth Governments on key health issues. It will aim to influence government health policy and processes with a view to effecting changes to people's lives. Planning meetings for the workshop are being held regularly.

7. PRE-WHA MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTERS

The annual Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (CHMM) was held in Geneva, Switzerland on 13 May 2007 prior to the World Health Assembly. The theme of the meeting was *"Lifestyle diseases – health systems approaches"*. The CNF delegation consisted of Corinne Ward, European Board member, and Jeannett Martin and Sue Thomas of the Royal College of Nursing, UK. These delegates participated in the roundtables at the meeting.

The Ministers issued a statement which said that national health systems needed to be strengthened in order to cope with an increase in non-infectious diseases like diabetes, cardio-vascular disease and cancer. It highlighted the link between these non-communicable diseases, poverty and slow economic growth and indicated that health systems in many Commonwealth countries were struggling with the double burden of both infectious and non-infectious diseases. "There is need for action to strengthen national health systems, including meeting commitments on financing, service delivery and promoting a healthy lifestyle," the statement concluded.

Key messages from the roundtables relating to nursing that were reported to Ministers included:

- the important role that nurses have in non-communicable diseases;
- the value of the specialist nurse role;
- the need for the involvement of national nurses associations in the development of health policy in order to get the support of ground level practitioners.

8. COMMONWEALTH HIV AND AIDS ACTION GROUP

Following initiatives by Commonwealth Heads of Government, in 2000 some Commonwealth non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the CNF, and some other organisations, which were concerned about the HIV/AIDS situation, formed the Para55 Group. The Group was reconstituted in 2004 as the Commonwealth HIV and AIDS Action Group. It continues to focus on a multi-sectoral approach to combating HIV/AIDS. It is principally involved in international and national advocacy and information sharing with NGOs. The Chair of the Group is now Dr Mandeep Dhaliwal, Senior Technical and Policy Advisor, International HIV/AIDS Alliance.

In August 2006 the Group submitted a paper on universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support to the XVIth International AIDS Conference in Toronto, Canada and participated in the event. In September 2006 Dr Dhaliwal met the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Donald McKinnon, to brief him on current global issues arising from the Toronto Conference and to learn more about the Secretariat's strategy document on HIV/AIDS, which is under review.

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 £9,000 to assist the attendance of nurses and midwives at the CNF/SPNF Workshop in Apia, Samoa in August/September 2006 (see Section 11) and the Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF Workshop held in Singapore in February 2007 (see Section 5).

As agreed at the Biennial Meeting in Singapore in May 2005 and following general increases in subscription rates other than the minimum rate from 1 October 2005, the minimum rate was increased from £50 to £65 from 1 October 2006. Subscription income for the year totalled £11,815, a rise of

£3,205 on 2005/06. The rise was due to the subscription increases and the payment of arrears by certain countries.

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). No grants were made from the Fund during the year.

11. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

The CNF and the South Pacific Nurses Forum (SPNF) held a very worthwhile workshop on *Strengthening the nursing and midwifery contribution in the management of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific* in Apia, Samoa from 30 August to 1 September 2006. 22 nurses and midwives from eight countries in the region participated in the workshop, which took place prior to the main SPNF meeting. Representatives from WHO and UNICEF were key resource persons at the workshop. Mrs Alumita Bulicokocoko, the CNF Board Member for the Pacific region, facilitated the workshop and made a presentation on "The CNF perspective and action on HIV/AIDS". The Fiji Nursing Association and the Samoa Nurses Association are thanked for their work in organising the workshop.

A Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF workshop was held in Singapore on 12/13 February 2007. Around 80 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).

Following the Commonwealth Steering Committee/CNF workshops the CNF held a further workshop in Singapore on 14 February. There were 10 participants from 4 countries. Participants were helped to develop project action plans utilising the tools learnt during the Steering Committee workshops. Peggy Vidot (Commonwealth Secretariat), Jill Iliffe (Australian Nurses Federation) and President, Susie Kong facilitated the workshop.

Appropriately the CNF held its 6th European Conference in London on 9/10 March 2007 immediately prior to Commonwealth Day. The Conference was held at the headquarters of the Royal College of Nursing, UK with the theme *Commonwealth nurses advancing nursing care: collaboration in Europe*. RCN President, Maura Buchanan, welcomed delegates and Corinne Ward, the CNF's Board Member for the European region, gave the opening address. Over 80 delegates attended. Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary-General, delivered the keynote address. The Conference also featured an important plenary panel session on *Reducing the incidence of lifestyle diseases: the nursing contribution*. The panellists were Martin Bradley, Chief Nursing Officer, Northern Ireland (representing UK), Jesmond Sharples, Director, Nursing Services, Malta and Angeliki Tapakoude, Chief Nursing Officer, Cyprus. The RCN is thanked for its excellent management of the Conference.

A CNF workshop was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 24/25 May in conjunction with its Biennial Meeting. This was on the theme *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals - the Commonwealth nursing and midwifery contribution*. Papers were presented on nursing and midwifery services, the management of HIV/AIDS, evidence-based care, improving maternal and child health, nursing and midwifery strategies and the Commonwealth Secretariat's health work programme.

12. WEBSITE

The Website 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. The site has been upgraded in terms of presentation including photographs. Visits to the site have now reached over 8,000 per year.

13. PUBLICATIONS

Issues Nos. 37 and 38 of the CNF Newsletter were published during the year. These were published and printed in Singapore in full colour at a considerable cost saving with the continuing excellent assistance and cooperation of President, Susie Kong, and the Singapore Nurses Association.

14. BIENNIAL MEETING

The CNF held a very successful Biennial Meeting and Workshop at the Cititel Mid Valley Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 24/25 May. President, Susie Kong was in the Chair. For details of the Workshop see Section 11. A Board Meeting was held at the same venue on 22/23 May.

Important future directions were agreed at the Meeting under the item "Implementation of Strategic Directions 2005-2010" as follows:

- Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings – there should be more members' involvement in input and selecting speakers for future workshops at the Commonwealth Peoples Forums. Members should also be urged to attend and participate in these events in order to raise the nursing profile. Efforts should be made to get government financial support for the appropriate regional Board member to attend each event.
- Commonwealth Health Ministers Meetings – there should be more CNF activity at these meetings and members should be encouraged to send representatives. The process should be coordinated to ensure participation of experts on the selected theme. The CNF can usually get three observer places at the meetings. Representatives should have more involvement in the roundtables. As the CNF has the current representation on the Commonwealth Advisory Committee for Health, the opportunity should be taken to influence the sub-themes of the roundtables for CHMM 2008.
- Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery – efforts should be made to get more effective CNF involvement in the work of the Committee (through Board members' input) and communication should also be made with the Commonwealth Secretariat to assist in achieving this aim. The CNF should make representations for regular meetings/teleconferences.
- Collaboration – there should be more work with other organisations such as WHO, other NGOs, charities, regional nursing organisations, migrant nursing groups, commercial organisations etc.
- Projects – CNF should concentrate on in-country activities involving capacity building and training instead of expensive regional workshops. These should be in association with partners such as national nursing groups and focus on sharing expertise. Visits involving a number of neighbouring countries could be arranged.
- Financial model – this should be reviewed including charging for administrative work carried out, charging fees when the CNF name is used for events, funding Board members to attend meetings, fees/subsidies for Biennial Meetings etc.
- Membership campaign – a campaign should be carried out with emphasis on the new directions.

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