



6th SUMMATIVE CONGRESS
Lusaka Zambia 6-8 July 2017

CLOSING COMMENTS

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It has been our tradition in ARC to conclude our meetings with closing comments and for the past twelve months it has been my privilege to share my closing thoughts with you.

I imagine that you are all feeling rather sad at the thought that this most probably will be our last ARC meeting. It is a hard thought as we have spent a long time together and achieved such amazing outcomes.

I have been involved in many projects during my long career as a nurse and midwife and I can confidently say that ARC has been the most successful program I have ever been involved with and I am sad that we appear to have come to the end of the ARC journey that we have taken together.

But of course we all know that nothing lasts forever, and as one door closes, other doors open. We need to have the vision and the courage to look for those open doors and take the necessary steps to walk a new and different path.

The first ARC Summative was held in February 2011: six years and 5 months ago. In that time we have held six Summative Congresses, including this one, and ten learning sessions. I have been in the unique position of being able to attend every ARC meeting from 2011 until now, and to work closely with most countries in providing technical assistance.

Over that time, 43 grants have been awarded and significant improvements in nursing and midwifery legislation, regulation, and quality of care have been made by each of the seventeen countries that have been a part of the ARC family. It was encouraging to see the chart Jessica shared with us this morning to see how teamwork; QUAD relationships; collaboration with national and regional organisations; and increased funding opportunities have improved exponentially over the five years of ARC.

At this Summative, we have missed our colleagues from South Africa and South Sudan and also our colleagues from the Seychelles and Mauritius who were part of ARC for the first four years.

I want to emphasise the importance of nursing and midwifery leaders being involved in facility level projects. It is only when you go to facilities and investigate and analyse the care being provided that you can see where quality improvements can be made.

Through ARC you have been given excellent tools and experience to use in developing facility level projects of your own with local Ministry or donor funding. As nursing and midwifery leaders, you have the opportunity and the capacity to translate facility level learning into national policy and changes to practice and it is my challenge to you that you ensure that the projects you have undertaken and concluded as part of ARC are scaled up and translated into the provision of quality nursing and midwifery care nationally.

I want to congratulate all the country teams for their dedication and commitment to ARC and to the successful completion of their projects over the past five years. This year, the addition of baseline and endline facility data collection has been an additional challenge but the assessments have generated such rich information and have been a very positive learning experience. The ARC faculty is very aware of the pressures on your time and energy due to the senior positions you hold within your own countries and are very grateful to you for the work you have done.

I want to thank our guests and technical experts who have shared their expertise with us at this meeting: sharing the highlights from the ECSA Health Ministers meeting and the opportunities to influence that forum; the role of nurses and midwives in rolling out voluntary medical male circumcision; the research role and activities of the Zambia National Public Health Institute; and the quality improvement activities of the Zambia Ministry of Health.

I want to thank the ARC Secretariat: Agnes, Nancy and Nixon, for all their work in coordinating the logistics for the meeting with such efficiency and good humour; and I want to acknowledge my fellow ARC Faculty members who have generously shared their knowledge and experience on behalf of ARC in a warm, open, and collegiate manner.

And finally, I want to thank Zambia for hosting this meeting. I extend my condolences to Zambia on the death of your Permanent Secretary. I met him several times at Commonwealth Health Ministers' meetings, most recently in May this year, which gave me the opportunity to share information and ideas with him about nursing and midwifery and health in general. I feel very distressed by his death and feel deeply for his family. Such a sad event reminds us of the uncertainty and frailty of life and why we are nurses and midwives, and renews our commitment to provide the best quality care we can to the people of each of our countries.

The personal and professional growth we have all experienced over the time we have spent together has been remarkable. I look around the room and see nursing and midwifery leaders who have grown so much in learning, understanding, experience, and confidence. The opportunity that ARC has provided has contributed immeasurably to that personal and professional growth.

I cherish the close friendships I have made with all of you through ARC. I know that many of those friendships will continue through my own organisation, the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation, and through ECSACON. Each of you has a special place in my heart. I have been enriched through our interaction. You have all left a little of yourself with me, and with each other, which will provide many happy moments of reflection for us all in the future. I hope I have left a little bit of myself with you.

I am not prepared to say goodbye because I am determined we will all meet again in the future as ARC family. Safe travels home and take care of yourselves until we meet again.