

POLICY STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT OF NURSES AND MIDWIVES



Endorsed

30 November 2022

The Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation (CNMF) endorses the right of each individual nurse or midwife to migrate from one country to another in accordance with the applicable laws of their home country and their destination country.

The CNMF recognises that individual nurses and midwives may choose to migrate from one country to another for a wide range of reasons, including to: obtain further education and experience; develop their skills; advance their own careers; improve their economic, social or environmental situation; accompany partners or other family members; or escape conflict or threats to their, or their families' safety.

The international migration of nurses and midwives can make a contribution to the development and strengthening of health systems to both source and destination countries if recruitment is managed fairly, ethically and transparently taking into account the rights, obligations and expectations of source and destination countries and the nurse or midwife who is migrating. The international migration of nurses and midwives can bring new and valuable perspectives and learning that enables the transfer of experience, culture and the sharing of ideas between source and destination countries.

All international recruitment of nurses and midwives should be conducted in accordance with internationally agreed principles of transparency and fairness, regardless of whether the recruitment is for temporary or permanent employment.

Nurses and midwives:

- Should obtain comprehensive information about visa requirements for work or study in the destination country; employment opportunities; and the process to register as a nurse or midwife when contemplating migration to another country to enable them to assess the benefits and risks of migration, and make a timely and informed decision. There may be other requirements such as: language proficiency to enable them to communicate effectively; health checks; or criminal record checks.

Nursing and midwifery regulatory bodies:

- Should have clear and accessible information about the requirements and process of registration for nurses and midwives outside their country. Requests for registration should be dealt with promptly and fairly.

Nursing and midwifery professional and/or industrial associations:

- Should make information available to potential nurse or midwife migrants about the process of migration to their country.

Governments:

- Should aim to establish a sufficient nursing and midwifery workforce to meet the needs of its citizens for nursing and midwifery care and not use the international recruitment of nurses and midwives to replace appropriate workforce planning and the education, employment and retention of locally educated nurses and midwives.¹
- Should have clear and accessible national policies on international recruitment binding both government organisations and recruitment agencies which ensures that:
 - Recruitment is undertaken in an ethical, transparent and managed way.²
 - Recruitment of nurses and midwives does not target countries on the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguard List 2020 unless there is a government-to-government agreement which provides benefits to the source country.³
 - Government-to-government agreements should be developed with the involvement in both countries of national nursing and midwifery professional associations and trade unions representing nurses and midwives, as well as nursing and midwifery regulatory bodies, to ensure that they are genuinely mutually beneficial.
 - Nurses and midwives before they immigrate are provided with information about employment rights in the host country.
 - Nurses and midwives who migrate have the same legal rights and protections as locally educated staff in all conditions of employment, including remuneration, career progression, educational opportunities and professional development without discrimination of any kind.
- Should have clear and accessible information to assist individuals who wish to migrate to their country, both general information and information specific to occupational groups including guidance on the immigration system and visas; employment rights in the host country; and processes for reporting exploitative employers or training organisations.

Employers:⁴

- Should provide a clear contract of employment which is equivalent to that of locally educated staff and which outlines salary and conditions of employment including leave entitlements, as well as any penalties applicable if the nurse or midwife wishes to vary or break the contract.

¹ Commonwealth Secretariat 2003 https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/files/content/images/%7B7BDD970B-53AE-441D-81DB-1B64C37E992A%7D_CommonwealthCodeofPractice.pdf.

² World Health Organisation 2010 *Global Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Personnel* <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/migration-code>.

³ World Health Organisation 2020 *Health Workforce Support and Safeguard List* <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/health-workforce-support-and-safeguards-list>.

⁴ Government of the United Kingdom 2022 *Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health and Social Care Personnel in England* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-international-recruitment-of-health-and-social-care-personnel/code-of-practice-for-the-international-recruitment-of-health-and-social-care-personnel-in-england>

- Should provide nurses and midwives who migrate with a comprehensive induction and orientation to the workplace which enables them to practice safely and effectively within the health system of the destination country.
- Should provide pastoral support covering such areas as accommodation, transport, healthcare, financial systems, professional and industrial associations, relevant diaspora groups, Embassies and High Commissions, and an introduction to social networks.

Data should be collected on all international recruitment of nurses and midwives and made publicly available so that the migration can be monitored and assessed and remedial action taken when necessary. Compliance with this policy statement will ensure that the international recruitment of nurses and midwives minimises harm to the health systems of source countries whilst contributing to destination countries and safeguarding the rights of nurses and midwives to migrate.
