



COMMONWEALTH NURSES FEDERATION

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COMMONWEALTH ASIA SYMPOSIUM ON THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OF HEALTH WORKERS

Six representatives from the CNF participated in the Commonwealth Asia Symposium on the International Migration of Health Workers which was held in New Delhi India 17-18 November 2008. The Symposium was hosted by the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Medical Association. The purpose of the Symposium was for Commonwealth health professional associations to consider how best they could support their members in addressing issues around the international migration of health workers.

Draft recommendations from the Symposium included Commonwealth health professional associations developing an online pre-migration check list for health professionals considering migration; and developing actions to promote the *Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers* to their members and through their members to the respective governments in member countries.

The CNF representatives were:



Susie Kong CNF President

Susie was representing Singapore at the Symposium and gave an interesting and insightful presentation about her own experiences as a migrant nurse, first in the UK, then in Singapore and finally returning to her home country Malaysia.



**Sheila Seda
TNAI Secretary General**

Sheila represented India at the Symposium and was a wonderful host to the CNF delegation. Sheila considered the Symposium would give the TNAI strategies to safeguard the rights of nurses and to promote ethical recruitment.



**Keerthi Wanasekara
Secretary Sri Lanka Nurses Association**

Keerthi considered the Symposium provided information and evidence to strengthen local professional associations so they could assist nurses considering migration as well as support the local migrant nursing workforce.



**Ramziah Bt Ahmad
President, Malaysian Nurses Association**

Ramziah gave an excellent and well received presentation on retention strategies the Malaysian Nurses Association had successfully negotiated with their government in an effort to minimise the migration of nurses from Malaysia, particularly specialist nurses.



**Irshad Begum, Chairperson, Education Committee,
Pakistan Nurses Association**

Irshad found the Symposium a useful and timely opportunity to share sensitive and crucial issues and develop strategies for the retention of health professionals in Pakistan.



**Jill Iliffe, Executive Secretary
Commonwealth Nurses Federation**

Jill found the Symposium challenging and exciting and considered it a positive initiative by the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat which will give the CNF some additional practical strategies to pursue to assist members to address migration issues.



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In preparation for the Symposium the CNF conducted a short online survey of members on issues around the migration of nurses. There was a 40% response rate with 81.25% of respondents considering that migration was affecting their local supply of nurses; 50% reporting their government was actively recruiting nurses from other countries; and only 31.25% who felt their governments were adhering to the *Commonwealth Code of Practice* in their recruiting practices.

The main reasons nurses considered migrating to another country were:

- ⇒ Better salaries (87.5%)
- ⇒ Better working conditions (56.25%)
- ⇒ Improved living conditions and opportunities (37.5%)
- ⇒ Professional development and education (25%)
- ⇒ Career progression and recognition (25%)
- ⇒ Children's education (25%)
- ⇒ Enhance nursing experience (18.75%)

Solutions from the survey put forward to address issues around the international migration of health workers were:

- ⇒ increasing student enrolment,
- ⇒ reducing student attrition,
- ⇒ increasing worker retention (salaries, working conditions, incentives, career progression, continuing education),
- ⇒ enhancing productivity, and
- ⇒ better deployment of the existing workforce.

Susie Kong summed up the Symposium by saying: *The in depth deliberations on migration, recruitment and retention by the Commonwealth health professionals group were most enlightening and beneficial. It was a great Symposium with a rich sharing of views on unethical recruitment and successful retention strategies. Congratulations to the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Medical Association for this initiative.*

The CNF has been asked to host a second Symposium on the international migration of health workers in Botswana, Africa in February 2009.

TNAI TURNS 100

Susie Kong represented the CNF at the centenary celebrations of the Trained Nurses Association of India.



The inauguration ceremony: Mr Arvind Kulkarni, President of TNAI with former Indian President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, lighting the ceremonial lamps.



Susie Kong with members of the TNAI Maharashtra Branch Executive who hosted the celebrations in Mumbai

Following the Symposium, CNF representatives met with Sheila Seda at the TNAI offices to discuss a CNF workshop next February in New Delhi following the Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery regional workshop. The TNAI were very gracious hosts.

