

## ANNUAL REPORT 1998/99

The 50th anniversary of the founding of the modern Commonwealth was celebrated on 27th April 1999 at a reception organised by the Royal Commonwealth Society and the Confederation of Indian Organisations. As one of the more active Commonwealth professional associations the Federation continues to maintain a high profile in both pan-Commonwealth and regional activities.

The Federation held its biennial meeting in London 24-25 June with a record attendance and was prominently represented at the International Council of Nursing centennial conference which followed.

The Federation was joint host with the Royal College of Nursing at a luncheon at Marlborough House on 29 June which was graced by the presence of Her Majesty the Queen who expressed her pleasure at meeting nurses from the Commonwealth. The luncheon was sponsored by the Royal National Pension Fund for Nurses.

### BIENNIAL GENERAL MEETING

The Federation's biennial general meeting, funded from its own resources, was held in London, 24-25 June 1999. It attracted over seventy representatives from twenty six countries including several from UK based Commonwealth nursing organisations.

The general meeting was preceded by a meeting of the Federation's Board which, for the first time, was fully attended. Board members also attended the first meeting of the newly constituted Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing & Midwifery.

The general meeting heard papers on

- Evidence based nursing practice: a perspective from India.** Narender Nagpal (India);
- Advanced nursing practice.** Karen Chalmers (Canada)
- Staffing health facilities: dilemmas of the times.** Beulah Duke (Trinidad).

In addition Yvonne Moores, (UK) reported on **The 12th Commonwealth Health Ministers' meeting: the future direction of the Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing & Midwifery.**

These topics are among those identified as priority issues for nurses and midwives at the 12th Commonwealth Health Ministers' meeting, Barbados, 1998. An ad hoc Strategy Sub-Committee of the Board was appointed to develop the views of the meeting into a coherent programme of work on the theme **Health in the community**. This would aim to attract donor funding

The Federation is grateful to the Commonwealth Foundation for hosting a reception for delegates and to Reckitt & Colman for a donation of £2,000 towards the cost of an evening function during the biennial meeting.

## **ELECTIONS AND BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

There were changes in Board membership. Judy Uren (Australia), Pacific Board member, resigned on health grounds and was succeeded by the runner up in the regional election, Nigel Kee (New Zealand).

Following a two year gap, during which the region was unrepresented, Philda Nzimande (South Africa) was elected Board member for the East, Central & Southern Africa region. She and Mr Kee will serve for the balance of the regional term of office until 2001.

Elections were held for the Europe and South Asia regions. Betty Kershaw (UK) succeeds Kyriaki Stubbings (Cyprus) for Europe and Saramma Samuel (India) succeeds Kusum Vithana (Sri Lanka) for South Asia. The new members took office in June 1999 and will serve until 2003.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Federation was pleased to welcome the return of the Fiji Nursing Association following that country's return to membership of the Commonwealth. The Cook Islands also returned to active membership after a gap of eight years. Paid up members number thirty five. Efforts continue to improve membership levels.

## **COMMONWEALTH FELLOWSHIP**

The Federation made a successful nomination to the Commonwealth Fellowship programme operated by the Commonwealth Foundation. Tan Wee King from Singapore spent two weeks in London participating in a series of visits and seminars before travelling to Fiji and Australia for the remainder of the programme. The quality of Fellows is remarkably high and it is to nursing's credit that the Federation has achieved one of the highest rate of nominations since the programme was founded.

## **COMMONWEALTH STEERING COMMITTEE FOR NURSING & MIDWIFERY**

Close cooperation with the Steering Committee continues. Following the endorsement of its activities by the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of Commonwealth Health Ministers, Barbados, 1998, the Committee has been reconstituted with revised terms of reference and a new membership. This includes the Federation's Board, which is now in formal relationship with the Committee, and a number of Commonwealth Chief Nursing Officers. The new Steering Committee met on 25 June following the biennial general meeting of the Federation.

## **CHMM AND NGO FORUM**

Board members Peggy Vidot (Seychelles), Judy Uren (Pacific), Emma Banga (West Africa), together with the Executive Secretary were present at a NGO health forum preceding the 12th Commonwealth Health Ministers meeting, Barbados, 1998. Mrs Vidot presented a lead paper on **Health sector reforms as they affect vulnerable & disadvantaged groups.**

At the meeting of Health Ministers Yvonne Moores (Chair, Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing & Midwifery) presented a nursing/midwifery paper from detailing evidence collected from Commonwealth government nurses and nursing associations. This painted a picture of increasing staff shortages throughout the Commonwealth arising from low pay and poor morale and a consequent escalating manpower crisis.

Ministers called for policies which would attract and retain staff, emphasise strategic planning, policy analysis and agenda setting; and information management in the context of wider health agendas. They agreed that the Steering Committee should continue its work of identifying and analysing these matters for their attention – activities with which the Federation will be closely allied.

## FINANCE

The Commonwealth Foundation continued its valued support by providing a grant of £13,000 as core funding for meeting the Federation's basic operating costs. The Foundation also provided a sum of £5,000 to meet the costs of workshops held in Swaziland for ECSA region and Tonga at the South Pacific Forum.

Subscription income totalled £10,216. In view of the difficulties experienced by small associations in meeting the minimum of £50 no increase in subscription rates is planned.

A sum of £2,000 was awarded by Reckitt & Colman toward the cost of an evening function for those attending the biennial general meeting.

## REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

At the South Pacific Nurses Forum, held in Tonga in August 1998, Judy Uren (Australia), Pacific Board member, chaired a panel discussion relating to **Health for all by the year 2000**. Ms Uren also delivered a paper on the Federation's programmes and their strong links to the Commonwealth's action plan for nursing & midwifery. Attendance at the meeting was drawn entirely from Commonwealth countries in the region.

The President, Peggy Vidot (Seychelles), in cooperation with Margaret Phiri of the Commonwealth Regional Health Secretariat, Arusha, organised and led a workshop on **Health sector reforms: opportunities and challenges for nurse leaders in East, Central & Southern Africa** in Swaziland, August 1998. Some twenty nurses from surrounding countries attended. The workshop took advantage of participants' attendance at the biennial meeting and scientific conference of the East, Central & Southern African College of Nursing.

## OFFICE MOVE

During April 1999 the Secretariat's work was badly disrupted by the removal of the Royal College of Nursing (where it is based) from Cavendish Square to a site in Euston Road, London. Problems associated with locating the Federation's office within the Euston office resulted in members being unable to contact the Executive Secretary by any means for over three weeks; consequent backlogs of work accrued.

Technical problems arising from the move have resulted in the Secretariat relinquishing its own telephone line. Its new number is 0171 647 3593 a direct line on the Royal College of Nursing's network.

## EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The Executive Secretary represented the Federation at various meetings and events in Britain. These included planning and debriefing meetings associated with the meeting of Commonwealth Health Ministers and the NGO Forum in Barbados; meetings of the re-formed Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing & Midwifery and an NGO planning meeting linked to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to be held in South Africa in November 1999.

She attended the one day meeting of Commonwealth Health Ministers in Geneva on 16 May.

## PUBLICATIONS

Issues 21 and 22 of the **Newsletter** were produced and distributed. The proceedings of the Federation's 2nd Europe Regional Conference held in Malta in March 1998, **Moving nursing forward: affirming our right to care**, are in an advanced state of readiness for publication.