

COMMONWEALTH NURSES FEDERATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2001/2002

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.

MEMBERSHIP

The CNF was delighted to welcome the Bangladesh Nurses Association and the Zambia Nurses Association back into active membership after lengthy absences. The Board agreed to waive the arrears of subscriptions of both associations after consideration of their financial circumstances. In March 2002 the New Zealand Nurses Organisation also gave notice to rejoin the CNF and engage actively in its work.

GOVERNING BOARD

Following elections at the Biennial Meeting in June 2001 Mrs Reena Bose (India) assumed the office of President for a four-year term and Miss Beulah Duke (Trinidad and Tobago) the office of Vice President for a second term of four years. The following regional Board members took office following elections in March 2001:

Atlantic – Ms Lynda Kushnir Pekrul (Canada), elected to replace Mrs Karen Chalmers (Canada)
East, Central & Southern Africa – Professor Philda Nzimande (South Africa), elected for a second term
Pacific – Mrs Alumita Bulicokocoko (Fiji), elected to replace Mr Nigel Kee (New Zealand)
West Africa – Mrs Emma Banga (Ghana), elected for a second term.

OFFICERS

Mr Michael Stubbings began a new four-year term as Executive Secretary on 1 August 2001. Mr Douglas Beattie commenced his third four-year term as Treasurer in July 2001.

The Executive Secretary represented the CNF at various meetings in the UK during the year, including five meetings of the Para 55 Group. He also represented the CNF at the following international meetings:

- NGO Consultation Workshop, Christchurch, New Zealand, November 2001
- 13th Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (13CHMM), Christchurch, New Zealand, November 2001
- 4th CNF European Conference, Nicosia, Cyprus, March 2002
- Commonwealth Health Ministers Pre-WHA Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, May 2002.

The Executive Secretary, accompanied by Mrs Sylvia Denton, Vice President of the Royal College of Nursing, UK, attended an Observance for Commonwealth Day at Westminster Abbey in March 2002.

On the same evening the Queen with the Duke of Edinburgh hosted a reception at Buckingham Palace for nearly 800 guests to mark Commonwealth Day and to celebrate her 50 years as Head of the Commonwealth. The Executive Secretary and his wife were invited to this function, where they met members of the Royal Family, Commonwealth Ministers, High Commissioners and other distinguished guests.

13TH COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTERS MEETING

13CHMM was held in Christchurch, New Zealand in November 2001 on the theme “Priority Setting in Health Systems”. The meeting was chaired by Mrs Annette King, Minister of Health of New Zealand. The CNF had observer status at the meeting and was represented by Mrs Reena Bose (President, India), Mrs Patricia Kongwa (Zambia) and the Executive Secretary.

The Health Ministers considered the following matters:

- the work of the Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery
- the work of the Health Department of the Commonwealth Secretariat
- the impact of globalisation on health
- financial resources for health
- human resources (including the development of a Commonwealth Code of Practice for International Recruitment of Health Workers)
- the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS
- bio-terrorism
- traditional and complementary health systems
- regional co-operation on health priorities
- tobacco and health
- improving efficiency and effectiveness of health systems.

NGO CONSULTATION WORKSHOP

A successful NGO Consultation was held at the University of Canterbury prior to 13CHMM in November 2001 to consider some key issues within the context of the theme of 13CHMM. This was attended by 56 people representing 41 different NGOs.

Mrs Reena Bose, Mrs Patricia Kongwa and the Executive Secretary represented the CNF and acted as resource persons during the meeting. Representatives from the nurses' associations of the Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand and Samoa also participated in the workshop.

Recommendations were made on the following issues:

- priority setting and quality service delivery from an indigenous and community perspective
- globalisation and mobility of health sector manpower from a health professional association perspective (including the proposed Commonwealth Code of Practice for International Recruitment of Health Workers)
- tobacco or health and the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control
- depression – to be included on the worldwide health agenda
- HIV/AIDS and reproductive health supplies security.

The recommendations were presented to Mrs Annette King, Minister of Health of New Zealand, at a subsequent special NGO event and the Report of the Consultation was adopted as an information paper for 13CHMM. The Report was subsequently presented to Health Ministers in plenary session and noted.

The work of the NGOs and the active involvement of the CNF received much attention and appreciation during 13CHMM. The CNF acknowledges the hard work put in by the Commonwealth Medical Association and the Commonwealth Organisation of Social Workers in organising this event.

COMMONWEALTH STEERING COMMITTEE FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

The CNF continued to assist in the work of the Steering Committee. At 13CHMM Mrs Anna Maslin, Chair of the Steering Committee, reported to Ministers on the extensive work of the Committee over the last three years.

The Ministers congratulated the Committee on the progress made and gave unanimous support for the continuation of its work and its latest recommendations. These recommendations concern:

- the involvement of nurses and midwives in health policy development;
- the progression of national action plans for nursing and midwifery;
- the assurance of staff competency;
- the development of human resource policies;
- the effectiveness of recruitment and retention policies and practices;
- the impact of HIV/AIDS on the workforce.

The future work programme of the Committee includes the provision of further guidance on key issues and the holding of three more workshops in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. The CNF is now involved with the preparatory work for the first of these workshops, which will be held in Calcutta, India at the end of September 2002. The workshop will focus on HIV/AIDS.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT OF HEALTH WORKERS

At 13CHMM Health Ministers considered a draft Commonwealth Code of Practice for International Recruitment of Health Workers prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat. Following lengthy discussions Ministers agreed that this provided a basis for further work to develop a Code to which member countries could subscribe.

Ministers recommended that a working group should be formed to work with the Secretariat by electronic means to finalise the draft for presentation to Ministers at the pre-WHA meeting in Geneva in May 2002. Ministers also recommended that the Secretariat should prepare a companion volume to the Code giving further guidance on the subject.

NGOs were invited to submit comments on the draft Code to the Commonwealth Secretariat and the CNF circulated it to national nurses associations for comment in December 2001 accordingly. The CNF's comments were sent to the Secretariat in February 2002.

At the pre-World Health Assembly meeting of Commonwealth Health Ministers in Geneva, Switzerland in May Ministers supported the adoption of the Code subject to certain amendment. The companion document, which will address problems caused by international recruitment, give further advice on the principles of the Code and contain examples of good practice, is in the course of development.

PRE-WHA MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTERS

Following a recommendation of the Commonwealth's High Level Review Group Ministers agreed that triennial meetings of Health Ministers would be discontinued. Future meetings of Health Ministers would consist of the annual meetings in Geneva in May and further special meetings if considered necessary. A discussion paper on the way forward will be prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat and circulated to interested parties.

NGOs expressed their concerns subsequently to the Commonwealth Secretariat about the lack of facilities for direct participation in the Geneva meetings in contrast to the triennial meetings, where NGOs have always been involved in committee and round table discussions.

A major decision was also taken on future policy at the pre-WHA meeting. Ministers agreed that Commonwealth countries would give greater priority to women's and children's health in order to reduce maternal, infant and child mortality in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

Other subjects addressed at the meeting were the work of the Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery (see above); the Code for International Recruitment of Health Workers (see above); traditional and complementary medicines; vaccines and immunisation; HIV/AIDS; diet, physical activity and health; and the harmful use of biological and chemical agents.

PARA55 GROUP

This Group, which consists principally of NGOs, was formed to promote and monitor the implementation of actions of Governments in response to paragraph 55 of the Heads of Governments' Durban Communiqué (November 1999) relating to HIV/AIDS. It supports the implementation of a multi-sectoral approach to combating HIV/AIDS in Commonwealth countries. The Executive Secretary represents the CNF on the Group.

Achievements of the Group during the year have included:

- contributing to the deliberations of Commonwealth Health Ministers
- participating in United Nations meetings
- convening conferences and expert meetings (eg on mother to child transmission and breastfeeding)
- petitioning Commonwealth Heads of Government
- running an active website.
- publicising the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

COMMONWEALTH FELLOWSHIP

The CNF was successful in obtaining a Fellowship in 2002. Mrs Palanitina Toelupe, Assistant Secretary, Training and Community Development Services in the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Samoa, received the award following nomination by the Samoa Nurses Association.

The aim of the Fellowship is to develop people who will actively promote the Commonwealth in their own countries. Each year twelve people are chosen drawn from the professions, non-governmental organisations, government and business.

Mrs Toelupe spent the first part of her programme in London in March 2002 before going on to Cyprus and Malta to complete her learning activities. During her time in London she met the Executive Secretary, Mrs Sylvia Denton, Vice President of the Royal College of Nursing, UK and Ms Caroline Hyde-Price, Head of International Affairs at the RCN, for a useful exchange of views and information. Prior to this Ms Shelagh Murphy (representing the Executive Secretary) attended a Dinner at the Commonwealth Club to meet the year's Fellows.

FINANCE

The Commonwealth Foundation continued to support the CNF. This consisted of a core grant of £13,000 towards the CNF's basic operating costs and £1,000 to assist the attendance of Maltese nurses at the 4th European Conference in Cyprus. This support is gratefully acknowledged.

Subscription income for the year totalled £7,865. Subscription rates remained unchanged.

REGIONAL ACTIVITY

The CNF's fourth European Conference held in Nicosia, Cyprus in March 2002 was attended by over 200 delegates from the three Commonwealth countries in the region – Cyprus, Malta and the UK. The theme of the Conference was **Nursing and the Commonwealth agenda: the European perspective**. A welcome to the conference was extended by Mrs Reena Bose, President of the CNF. A keynote address was given by Mr Frixos Savvides, Minister for Health, Cyprus.

Plenary sessions by Mrs Angeliki Tapakoude, President of the Cyprus Nurses Association, Mr Rudolph Cini, President of the Malta Union of Midwives and Nurses (MUMN) and Mrs Roswyn Hakesley-Brown, President of the Royal College of Nursing of the UK (RCN) addressed the subject of changes that have improved the quality of care.

Further plenary sessions were given by Mrs Bose, Mrs Corinne Scieluna (Chairperson, Education Committee, MUMN), Ms Beverley Malone (General Secretary, RCN), Mrs Janey Parris (Commonwealth Secretariat) and Ms Ainna Fawcett-Hennessy (Chief Nurse for Europe, WHO). The Conference also included a large number of workshops and concurrent sessions.

PUBLICATIONS

The following publications were produced and distributed during the year:

1. Issues 27 and 28 of the CNF Newsletter.
2. **Professional role of nurses: development and leadership**. Report of a workshop, Port of Spain, Trinidad, (July 2000).
3. **Commonwealth Nursing and Midwifery Associations and Chief Nursing Officers – Directory 2002**.

In addition, the following leaflets were issued to national nurses associations:

- “Celebrating Commonwealth Day” (January 2002)
- “About the CNF” (January 2002).

July 2002