EXECUTIVE SECRETARY REPORT
27th CNMF BIENNIAL MEETING OF MEMBERS
23th September 2026

INTRODUCTION



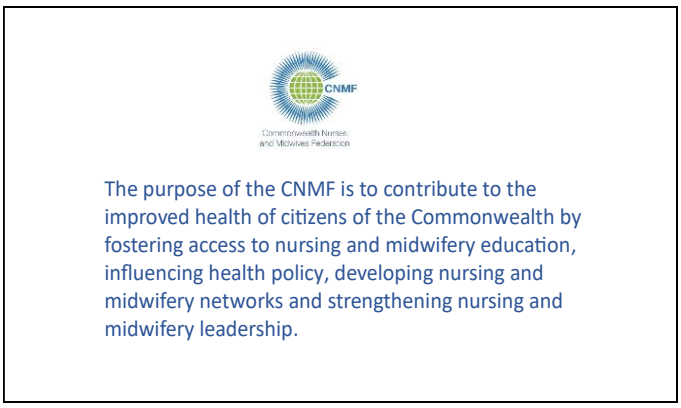
I am sorry I am not here in person to present this report to you today. Personal issues have kept me at home in Australia. I have asked my colleague, CNMF Liaison Officer, Mrs Yinglen Butt, to read the report on my behalf, but I am solely responsible for the content.

You will be aware that Ying was appointed by the CNMF Board in April 2025 as CNMF Liaison Officer. Ying is Jamaican by background, but a resident of London in the UK. As a Commonwealth accredited civil society organization, it is quite important for the CNMF to have a representative in the UK, who can attend the many meetings that are held, which require a personal presence. This was particularly important with the appointment of a new Secretary General of the Commonwealth on 1 April 2025.

My report is structured against the CNMF's seven priority areas. If you have any questions to my report, could you please put them in writing, and give them to either Ying or Kath, and I will respond promptly. I do not want Ying to be placed in the position of answering questions to a report she has not written, and is not responsible for.

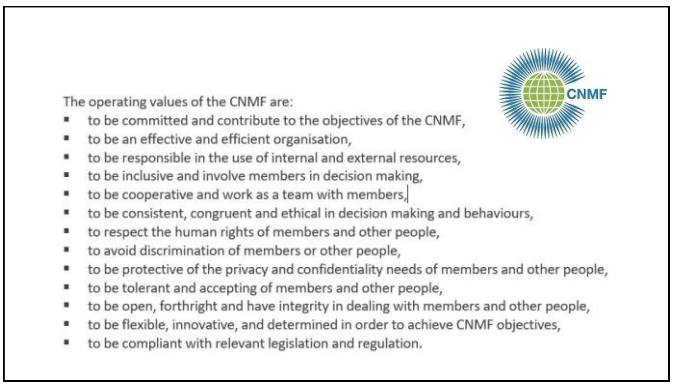
I wanted to start my report by reminding you, as CNMF members, of the purpose of the CNMF and the values that guide all our work.

PURPOSE



The purpose of the CNMF is to contribute to the improved health of citizens of the Commonwealth by fostering access to nursing and midwifery education, influencing health policy, developing nursing and midwifery networks and strengthening nursing and midwifery leadership.

VALUES



The values which guide all our work for the CNMF are outlined in the CNMF Constitution.

The operating values of the CNMF are:

- to be committed and contribute to the objectives of the CNMF,
- to be an effective and efficient organisation,
- to be responsible in the use of internal and external resources,
- to be inclusive and involve members in decision making,
- to be cooperative and work as a team with members,
- to be consistent, congruent and ethical in decision making and behaviours,
- to respect the human rights of members and other people,
- to avoid discrimination of members or other people,
- to be protective of the privacy and confidentiality needs of members and other people,
- to be tolerant and accepting of members and other people,
- to be open, forthright and have integrity in dealing with members and other people,
- to be flexible, innovative, and determined in order to achieve CNMF objectives,
- to be compliant with relevant legislation and regulation.

GOVERNANCE



The CNMF is governed by our Constitution and our elected Board. The Biennial Meeting of Members is the decision-making body of the organisation - so welcome to the 27th Biennial Meeting of Members.

We have always been blessed in the CNMF with willing volunteers to serve on the CNMF Board. This is our current Board, but as you are aware, the result of elections for a new President, Deputy President, and Regional Board Members for the Asia and the ECSA CNMF Regions will be announced later today.

I want to pay tribute to Kath and Rosemarie who finish their terms of office with the CNMF after the conference, and who are both retiring from active involvement in CNMF activities, although I am sure they will not be able to let go completely, and CNMF will certainly invite them to join us in future CNMF activities. Kath and Rosemarie have both been 'towers of strength' within the CNMF Board, guiding the organisation with wisdom, energy, dignity, and calm common sense.

Mrs Evelyn Kannan and Mr Simon Hlungwani have also finished their terms of office as Regional Board Members for the Asia and ECSA regions respectively. Evelyn and Simon have been active CNMF Board Members and representatives of CNMF in their region, and I know they will provide support and guidance to those representatives who take their place.

Members of the Board serve in a voluntary capacity. They are usually very busy people in their own organisations, but give their time and experience willingly and cheerfully. CNMF is indeed indebted to them, and thanks them sincerely.

All other Governance processes in the CNMF have been met in full. The CNMF Constitution is reviewed prior to each Biennial Meeting of Members, and no changes to the Constitution are recommended at this particular time. The CNMF submits an annual report to the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth Secretariat as part of its accreditation to the Commonwealth. The CNMF was re-accredited to the Commonwealth in May 2025 for a further three years.

You may remember, I wrote to all CNMF members a few months ago to advise that the CNMF is required to develop a new logo; the Commonwealth has advised that accredited organisations can no longer base, or incorporate, the Commonwealth logo into their own logo. I was hopeful that draft new logos could be shared at this meeting, however that has not been possible. New logo designs have been commissioned, and these will be shared with members for comment, and a consultation process undertaken for members to vote on the final outcome. If you have any creative ideas, they are very welcome. Please send to cnf@commonwealthnurses.org.

The CNMF is also a private limited company registered with Companies House in the UK. All the regulatory requirements of being a registered company have been met.

ADMINISTRATION



Administrative processes run smoothly as most are digitised. CNMF files have been digitised since July 2012. Access to files, finances, correspondence, communication, data bases, and archives etc are all available online wherever CNMF staff happen to be working. I want to thank the Royal College of Nursing UK for their continuing support for the CNMF. The CNMF registered office is care of the RCN, and the RCN scans and forwards any post to the CNMF – not that much mail is sent by post these days. CNMF staff have regular online meetings with the RCN International Team, and their friendship, collegiality and support are highly valued.

MEMBERSHIP

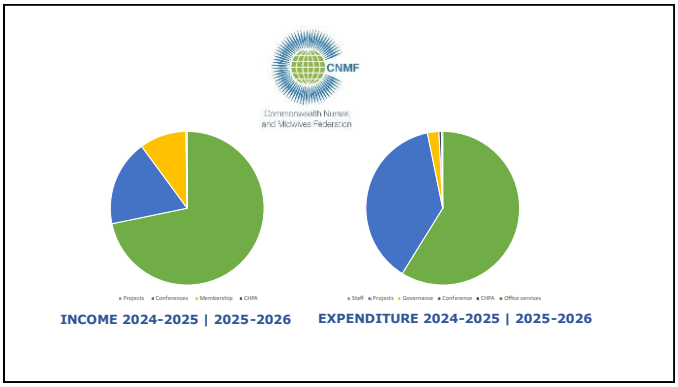


Membership of the CNMF is stable. We have a core group of members who are diligent in paying their membership fees, another group who eventually pay, and a further group who consider they are members, but very rarely, if ever, pay their membership fees.

It is a constant battle to maintain contact with members when executive personnel in associations change, and there is no handover of corporate history of membership of the CNMF. This means there is a real issue of connectedness between the CNMF and its membership.

The CNMF Board has been discussing ways to enhance that connectedness and we hope to trial a slightly new way of working by offering two webinars annually to each full financial member of the CNMF on an issue of importance to their members. Due to the effectiveness of digital communication, it means that CNMF can make and fulfil this online offer, which would not be possible to do in person. If members have any other practical suggestions to make to enhance the connection between their association and the CNMF, please let us know.

FINANCES



CNMF finances are a mix of membership fees, project grants, project management fees, and consultancies. It is always a struggle for a small organisation to be competitive for grant funding, and the work that the CNMF is capable of doing is limited only by a lack of funding. The majority of CNMF's income for many years has relied on consultancy and project work, and we have been very successful in securing long-term funding: for example, a seven-year funded project between 2011 and 2017; another five-year project between 2018 and 2023; and a third between 2023 and 2026. This has provided financial stability, however, it is not particularly ideal, and a situation where membership fees cover the salary of staff would be preferable, to provide stability and certainty for the organisation.

The CNMF Board have not increased membership fees since 2014, which represents 12 years without an increase in membership fees. At the time of this report, I do not know the outcome of the Board's discussion about membership fees which will occur at their meeting on 22 September. Membership fees are structured according to the number of 'fee paying' members of an organisation. The CNMF membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December, and annual invoices are generally sent out in January or February.

Membership fees are quite low and I am confident member countries can afford the annual membership fee, or are able to fund raise to cover it. Despite that, very few members pay on time. It is time-consuming and cost-ineffective chasing up members who have not paid invoices. Some of the late payment reflects an administration system within the majority of Commonwealth national nursing and midwifery associations that relies on volunteers, who are busy people. However, having an efficient administrative system, which pays invoices promptly, is a feature of good governance.

The CNMF finances are audited annually and the CNMF is registered for taxation purposes in the UK. The CNMF always receives congratulations from the auditor on our meticulous record keeping and transparent financial processes, which is very nice to receive.

Unfortunately, both Companies House in the UK and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), are closing their online submission service, and external software will have to be used in future to lodge company reports and corporation tax statements. This will probably require using an accountant based in the UK, which makes it a bit onerous for small companies like the CNMF who have been able to self-lodge in the past.

COMMUNICATION



Over the past few years, maintaining communication has been a challenge and there has been periodic disruption to communication from time to time for a range of reasons, however communication has been maintained to the extent it was possible. One of the difficulties with communication, already mentioned, is when the executive officers of associations change, and the CNMF is not advised of the new contact details. While a contact update form is sent to each member at the beginning of each year, very few are returned. The CNMF Board are keen to see a renewal of the level of communication with members that the CNMF has conducted in the past. Email and WhatsApp are used extensively to communicate on a day to day basis, which is a very cost-effective way of communicating.

The CNMF, at present, is not a keen user of social media. We cancelled our Twitter account when it became X. The misuse of social media and the lack of transparency, privacy controls, and social responsibility by social media companies, presents an ethical dilemma with their use. We do have a Facebook and an Instagram account, both owned by Meta, but I have to say that I am not very comfortable in using them. The CNMF is mindful of potentially breaching privacy laws in some Commonwealth countries. The advent of artificial intelligence and the current debate about regulation of AI, is also a complicating factor.

In 2014, the CNMF changed our name from Commonwealth Nurses Federation to Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation, a move that was initiated and supported by the then President of the International Confederation of Midwives. The CNMF has not, until now, changed its domain name or email address, however a decision has been made to do so, and the domain 'commonwealthnursesandmidwives' has been purchased, and a move from the old to the new domain will be taken after the conference. The new domain is a bit long, however 'CNMF' was not available. Recently we also changed website host, and that is working out very well. The new host will support the change of domain, and the old domain will remain active for two years after the move.

LIAISON



As I mentioned earlier, the CNMF Board appointed, Mrs Yinglen Butt, as Liaison Officer in April 2025. Ying will probably feel a little embarrassed reading this out, but I want to thank Ying very sincerely for her tireless support, good humour, and positive outlook. Ying is a wonderful addition to the CNMF team. I cannot speak too highly of the contribution she has made to the CNMF since her appointment. Ying is a consummate professional – she is confident, energetic, and committed to the CNMF, and an absolute delight to work with. Ying is already held in high esteem by all those who come into contact with her in Commonwealth circles. I think this was clearly demonstrated by her election to the Steering Committee of the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations, IFCO, recently.

Ying has worked diligently, well over and above what could reasonably be expected of her, in the preparations both for the Inaugural CNMF West Africa Region Conference in Nigeria in April, and for the 7th Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Conference tomorrow and Friday.

Through Ying, the CNMF has maintained liaison with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPA), and IFCO. Ying will be representing the CNMF at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the Commonwealth People's Forum, in Antigua and Barbuda in November.

Unfortunately, with the appointment of a new Secretary General of the Commonwealth, health and education have been removed as priority areas of focus for the Commonwealth. The three areas of focus are democracy, trade, and the environment. Despite very active and vigorous lobbying, this position has not changed. It is hard to comprehend that a lack of understanding exists that democracy, fair trade, and a safe environment require a population that is healthy and well educated.

A like situation exists from the appointment of a new Director General of the Commonwealth Foundation. The Foundation's priority areas of focus are climate and environmental justice; economic inclusion; and freedom of expression. While all the areas of priority are important ones, the exclusion of health and education as cross cutting themes for these priorities to be achieved, is very disturbing.

PROGRAMS

Oral Health for Nurses and Midwives



Over the two year reporting period, the major project for the CNMF has been the oral health project funded by Colgate. The CNMF partners in the project are C3 Collaborating for Health, and the World Continuing Education Alliance. The major component of the project was an online course on oral health for nurses and midwives, which has had amazing popularity and a totally unexpected and large completion rate. The course is hosted on the CPD platform of the World Continuing Education Alliance.

The success of the online Oral Health CPD for Nurses and Midwives led to the development of oral health teaching material for parents, for teachers, and for community health workers. This year, videos have also been recorded for use by front line health workers and also for undergraduate nurses and midwives.

PROGRAMS
Inaugural CNMF West Africa Region Conference



CNMF Conferences are also considered in the Program line. The National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANNM) accepted an invitation to host an Inaugural CNMF West Africa Region Conference. The Conference Committee consisted of representatives from CNMF, Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, and Ghana. The Committee held 21 meetings and a very successful conference with over 1,300+ participants, was held in April 2026. NANNM must take credit for the outstanding success of the conference, and I want to acknowledge the presence of the NANNM President and Assistant General Secretary here today. NANNM worked tirelessly to advertise the conference to nurses and midwives in Nigeria, and to obtain support from the Government of Nigeria, which meant the conference was not only successful, but made a welcome profit as well.

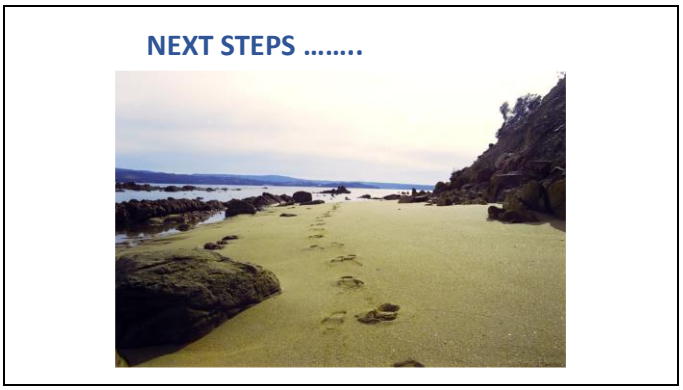
PROGRAMS
7th Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Conference



The Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI) put in a successful bid to co-host the 27th Biennial Meeting of Members and the 7th Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Conference. The Conference Committee of TNAI and CNMF representatives has met 14 times. TNAI officers and staff have put in an extraordinary amount of time to ensure the success of the conference, and I know you will have a wonderful two days.

The high-quality of the abstracts submitted both for the West Africa Conference and for this coming conference is a testament to the research and innovation that is being undertaken by nurses and midwives across the Commonwealth, to make sure they can provide the very best, evidence based nursing and midwifery care they can, to the people who need it.

NEXT STEPS



The next 12 months will be ones of consolidation for the CNMF under new leadership. I will be gradually handing over more responsibility to Ying. I want to focus on getting the CNMF history into our online archives, and making sure everything is up to date and in good order for a smooth transition. It is likely that the 28th CNMF Biennial Meeting of Members and the 8th Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Conference will be held in South Africa. That of course is subject to final approval by DENOSA.

I think the theme for this 2026 conference is very apt: *Shaping the future – nurses and midwives navigating new frontiers*

We certainly have new frontiers to navigate with AI, global conflicts, frequent disasters, and catastrophic adverse weather events.

But I am firmly of the view that nurses and midwives can shape the future: we are a large, caring, group of professionals who can positively influence opinion and events - locally, nationally, and internationally. But to shape the future, we must be prepared to actively and fearlessly take up that responsibility. Thank you.



Jill ILIFFE
Executive Secretary
Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation