President's Biennial Report

27th Biennial Meeting, Delhi

1. Purpose and overview

This report provides the Board and member National Nurses Associations with an overview of the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation's activity since the 26th Biennial Meeting in Malta. During the biennium, the Federation has continued to work across the Commonwealth through its member associations, strengthening professional collaboration, advancing policy and creating opportunities for shared learning. This work has taken place against a backdrop of continuing workforce pressures, including recruitment, retention and access to high-quality professional development.

2. Governance, policy and Commonwealth engagement

Following consideration by the Board in Malta, the CNMF approved policies on emergency and disaster preparedness and universal health coverage. These policies are available through the CNMF website and provide a clear basis for continued advocacy and engagement across the Federation.

I also maintained the Federation's presence within the wider Commonwealth. On behalf of the CNMF, I attended the final meeting of Accredited Organisations with Baroness Scotland and the inaugural meeting with Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, as well as the Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey. I record the CNMF's sincere appreciation to Baroness Scotland for her support and friendship throughout her term of office.

3. Regional collaboration and professional learning

A major priority during the biennium was the development of regional conferences designed to strengthen professional networks and respond to issues of shared concern. West Africa was the first region to take forward this approach, bringing together colleagues from Ghana, Cameroon, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

In April 2026, a three-day conference for nurses and midwives was held in Abuja, with more than 1,000 participants. The programme brought together distinguished speakers, guests, practitioners and students, and provided a valuable forum for professional exchange. The Liaison Officer and I attended on behalf of the CNMF, and I extend particular thanks to President Haruna and Mr Chidi Aligwe. I am especially grateful to the Nigerian National Nurses Association and to nursing and midwifery associations across West Africa for their partnership, energy and cooperation.

Engagement with students was a notable feature of the Abuja conference. Their informed, motivated and professional contribution demonstrated the strength of the next generation of nurses and midwives and reinforced the importance of including emerging professionals in the Federation's work.

The 27th Biennial Meeting and conference in Delhi extends this regional model, offering two days of papers, posters and keynote addresses. It represents another important opportunity for partnership and shared learning across Asia and the wider Commonwealth.

4. Partnerships, membership and diaspora engagement

The CNMF's work continues to be founded on its relationships with National Nurses Associations and the leadership shown by Board members across all Commonwealth regions. Regional collaboration has enabled open discussion of workforce pressures and strengthened the collective voice of the profession.

Ying Butt and I held a successful diaspora meeting at the Royal College of Nursing in London. The meeting provided an additional channel for engagement and supported stronger connections between Commonwealth nurses and midwives working across borders.

5. Organisational delivery and financial stewardship

Considerable organisational effort has supported delivery of the regional and biennial conferences. Fortnightly planning meetings, detailed programme development and careful budget management have underpinned this work. The financial outcome of the Abuja conference enabled participating West African countries to meet their subscriptions and provided a modest additional contribution to participating National Nurses Associations. The CNMF aims to achieve a similarly balanced outcome for the conference in India.

6. Priorities and outlook

The professional environment remains challenging. Recruitment, retention and equitable access to quality professional development continue to affect nursing and midwifery across Commonwealth regions. The CNMF's regional approach provides a practical means of sharing experience, identifying common priorities and strengthening the Federation's ability to influence policy and practice. National Nurses Associations will need to be aware of changing disease patterns, the influence of climate change, developing technology and workforce challenges. The next biennium should build on this model while maintaining a clear focus on member support, sustainable delivery and the implementation of agreed policy positions.

7. Acknowledgements and conclusion

The CNMF extends its sincere thanks to the Trained Nurses' Association of India for hosting the 27th Biennial Meeting in Delhi. Particular appreciation is offered to Professor Roy, Past President; Mrs Annie Kumar, President; Madam Evelyn; and the TNAI Board and staff for their generous welcome and support.

I also record my grateful thanks to the planning team; Jill Iliffe, Executive Secretary; Rosemarie Josey, Deputy President; Ying Butt, Liaison Officer; all Board members; and member National Nurses Associations. Their leadership, professionalism, commitment and good humour have sustained the Federation's work throughout the biennium.

Having served as Deputy President from 2014 and President from 2018, I have been privileged to meet and learn from nurses and midwives across the Commonwealth. The period has included the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, financial pressures and significant changes at Commonwealth headquarters. As new officers are appointed in India, I am confident that the CNMF is well placed to build on this work and continue from strength to strength.

Professor Kathleen McCourt CBE FRCN

President, CNMF