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

She 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.
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 TNAIL with former Indian President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, lighting the ceremonial lamps.

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

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