

from the PRESIDENT



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CNMF President

This issue of the Commonwealth Nurse is dedicated to the health workers in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. During the crisis, the CNMF was in constant contact with our members in Sierra Leone: Chief Nursing Officer, Ms Hossinatu Mary Kanu and President of the Sierra Leone Nurses Association, Mr Senesie Margao.

Two hundred and ninety six health care workers in Sierra Leone became infected with EVD and 221 died. One hundred and fifty two of them were nurses (2 registered nurses; 3 midwives; 2 nurse anaesthetists; 1 student nurse; 76 enrolled nurses; 33 maternal child health aides; 26 nursing aides; and 9 traditional birth attendants).

The world watched in horror as, at the time of writing this editorial, 28,600 cases were reported with 11,300 deaths. The Sierra Leone Nurses Association, supported by the Sierra Leone Government, travelled the country providing infection prevention education and teaching health workers the correct procedures for the use of personal protective equipment. The CNMF congratulates them warmly for this initiative and their commitment.

The first round of training, funded by the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation, reached 568 nurses and was conducted in: Bo, Kenema, Kailahun, Kono, Bombali, Koinadugu, Kambia, and the Western District of Freetown. During the second round of training, funded by the Commonwealth Foundation, 630 nurses and midwives were trained in Freetown and all twelve districts of Sierra Leone.



In 2012, the CNMF was funded by The Burdett Trust to provide maternal health training in Freetown and another four rural districts in Sierra Leone: Kenema, Bo, Makeni, and the Western District of Freetown. One hundred and forty nurses and midwives undertook the training. Sadly some of those nurses and midwives died during the Ebola epidemic.

Once the immediate crisis is over, there will be many questions to be asked and answered as to how such a virulent virus could cause such devastation unchecked and without any adequate health system, medical, or international response. The article, written by our Sierra Leone colleagues on page four of this journal, asks some of those questions and suggests some answers. But answers are not enough unless the international community works with the affected countries to make sure that such an epidemic can never happen again anywhere in the world.

Other important features in this issue of The Commonwealth Nurse is the United Nations 2015 report of progress toward the Millennium Development Goals for selected targets. Globally, there has been an improvement in the number of people living in extreme poverty from 47% in 1990 to 14% in 2015. The under 5 mortality rate has decreased from 90 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 43 per 1,000 live births in 2015. The maternal mortality rate has declined by 45% since 1990 and the number of births attended by skilled birth attendants increased from 59% in 1990 to 71% in 2015. There was also an increase in the number of household who had access to an improved drinking source from 76% in 1990 to 91% in 2015. There is no doubt that progress has been made. But there is also no doubt that there is still a long way to go.

All nurses and midwives should be familiar with the new proposed Sustainable Development Goals which are outlined on page thirteen. As with the MDGs, the SDGs cannot be achieved without the active participation of nurses and midwives so it is imperative that the nursing and midwifery leadership commences dialogue with the governments of their country and be a part of the planning process, implementation and monitoring.

February 6 was a day to reflect on Female Genital Mutilation, reported on page fourteen. Nurses and midwives must be at the forefront of strategies to address this issue.

And finally, on page fifteen, there is an opportunity to have input into the WHO public consultation on the development of their Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health. Nurses and midwives make up the greatest percentage of the health workforce in every country in the world so it is critical that as many nurses and midwives as possible have their say.