

Action in Diversity:

National Nursing Associations Meeting

The Health Human Resources Challenges of

The Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic



Taipei, Taiwan

May 20, 2005

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- Yegomawork Gossaye (Ethiopia)
- Achir Yani S. Hamid (Indonesia)
- Marion Howard (Barbados)
- Nguyen Bich Luu (Vietnam)
- Dotty Dikwayo (South Africa)
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Introductory Message from the Canadian Nurses Association

September 2005

Dear Colleagues:

As residents of the global village, we often hear people say that the challenges of dealing with health problems that cross continents are too much. These individuals urge us to take refuge in the physical, professional and legal fortresses found within our own borders in the hope that somehow an international plague will fade...or at least pass us by.

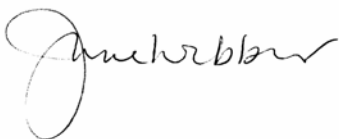
Fortunately, nurses have never accepted such a passive approach. Time and time again the nursing profession has chosen to work with others to meet global health-care challenges head-on. The worldwide scourge of HIV and AIDS is no exception, and Action in Diversity is the proof. During the May 2005 international forum held in Taipei, Taiwan, national nursing associations met to identify strategies, gaps and innovations to deal with the health human resources challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The report you now hold in your hands represents the fruits of these deliberations. The Canadian Nurses Association encourages your organization to review this report and provide us with your comments. In particular, CNA wants to hear your organization's views on:

- the accuracy of this report's presentation of the international health human resources challenges posed by HIV and AIDS;
- the validity of the report's proposed solutions to these challenges;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the messages that nurses want to communicate to decision-makers everywhere about meeting these health human resources challenges;
- how this report compares with its accompanying discussion paper entitled *Needs Analysis of Nursing Shortages in the Context of HIV/AIDS: Strategies, Gaps and Innovations*; and
- any other considerations not covered by this report that your organization feels should be included.

The Action in Diversity forum illustrated that nurses are willing to cooperate with other members of their profession and with other interested parties around the world to overcome HIV/AIDS. Nurses must continue to talk, to learn and to share information and experiences in the years to come. CNA trusts that your organization will review this report and provide us with your feedback in the near future so that the sharing process launched by Action in Diversity will flourish and ultimately lead to solutions to the health human resources challenges posed by HIV and AIDS.

Sincerely,



June Webber
Director, International Policy and Development
Canadian Nurses Association

I. Introduction

In 2004, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) identified the global shortage of health workers, and in particular nurses – who are the backbone of most national health systems – as one of the most significant obstacles to achieving the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations. The impact of HIV and AIDS, health systems restructuring, and internal and international migration are key challenges in the crisis in nursing human resources.

This paper shows that nurses around the world are ready to meet these challenges on both a national and a multilateral basis. It is a summary of discussions held during a forum entitled **Action in Diversity: National Nursing Associations Meeting the Health Human Resources Challenges of the Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic**. The forum was held on May 20, 2005, prior to the ICN's Quadrennial Congress in Taipei, Taiwan and following a series of teleconferences and electronic contacts among members of a technical advisory committee scattered around the world.

CNA organized this forum to allow national nursing associations to discuss the realities, challenges and the nursing strategies they have adopted to deal with nursing shortages in the context of HIV and AIDS. While national circumstances differ (e.g., nurse-to-population ratios, HIV prevalence rates, socio-economic status, political structures, nursing organizations), forum participants found that in general they face similar challenges that manifest themselves in different ways. Leaders from national nursing associations and nurses with expertise in HIV/AIDS shared their experiences in the hope of fostering collaborative relationships (south-south, south-north, and north-south). By working together, they hoped to develop strategies, policy support and innovations that could meet the global challenges of nursing shortages, which accentuate the calamity of HIV and AIDS.

The forum participants shared their strategies and proposals for meeting the health human resources challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic by focusing on four different groups of players in national and international health care and policy:

- 1) **National governments and domestic health organizations**
- 2) **International organizations**
- 3) **International financial institutions**
- 4) **National nursing associations and ICN**

For each of these groups of players, the forum participants asked two important questions:

In thinking about the issues confronting the caregivers who treat patients dealing with HIV and AIDS, what are the **major policy gaps** that must be addressed by these players?

What **actions** should each group of players take over the next three to five years to begin to address the identified policy gaps?

Once this analysis was completed, the forum participants created **key messages** that they wished to communicate to the **ICN Council of National Representatives Issues Forum** held May 21-23 in Taipei. In addition, they proposed **agenda items** for the **nursing satellite meeting** to be held in conjunction with the **International AIDS Society Conference** in Toronto during August 2006.

II. The Forum: Meeting the Health Human Resources Challenges of the Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic

A) NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND DOMESTIC HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

In addressing policy gaps, forum participants encourage national governments and domestic health organizations to work toward the following:

- **Enhancing their roles in dealing with the pandemic of HIV/AIDS.** Doing so would:
 - encourage global nursing intervention to benefit those living with HIV and AIDS;
 - reduce the social stigma of HIV/AIDS;
 - maximize the effectiveness of resource deployment to combat HIV/AIDS; and
 - take advantage of the contributions that national nursing associations and international organizations can make in dealing with HIV and AIDS.
- **Focusing policies on the primary prevention of HIV and AIDS.** This policy focus would include, for example, universal precautionary guidelines in areas such as immunization and infection control for health-care workers and for those suffering from HIV and AIDS. Other priorities include provisions for health insurance coverage for nurses and other health workers who work with HIV and AIDS patients and regulations that address the high burnout rate of nurses who treat those living with HIV and AIDS.
- **Enhancing financial and policy support for testing, counselling and other assistance for those living with HIV and AIDS as well as for HIV and AIDS research.**
- **Providing the infrastructure necessary for training and educating nurses about HIV/AIDS.** This illness should be covered in nursing program curricula and continuing education programs. Other improvements should include increasing the numbers of nurses in the health-care labour market and providing the necessary equipment, training and care standards to care safely for HIV and AIDS patients.
- **Supporting the collection and communication of information on HIV/AIDS.** This support would help to transfer knowledge about new technological and scientific developments for dealing with HIV and AIDS. It would also encourage national nursing associations to send representatives to international workshops and conferences on HIV/AIDS topics.

In addition, forum participants encourage national governments and domestic health organizations to take the following **action** over the next three to five years:

- **Create incentives to attract and retain nurses and other health workers and to provide them with the knowledge, training, tools and other resources to fight HIV/AIDS.** Such measures could include study programs that offer on-site contact with people living with HIV and AIDS as well as the nurses who treat them. In addition, governments could develop and implement continuing education programs that support families, communities and health-care providers by focusing on health promotion and the prevention of

HIV/AIDS. Other examples of incentives include improving nursing salaries and benefits and creating a fund to support registered nurses infected with HIV/AIDS. Support to health professionals, who themselves can be diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, may reduce stigma and offer the dignity that would benefit HIV/AIDS management.

B) INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Forum participants encourage international organizations to work toward the following:

- **Enhancing their role, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to deal with the pandemic of HIV/AIDS.** International organizations need to be equipped to deal with issues such as the migration of nurses, international guidelines for the care of HIV and AIDS patients, and unethical recruitment tactics.

The forum participants also encourage international organizations to take the following **action** over the next three to five years:

- **Cooperate fully with national governments, national nursing associations and other interested parties in the struggle against HIV/AIDS.** An example of such cooperation would be the promotion of appropriate working conditions and standards in areas such as nurse-to-patient ratios.

C) INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Forum participants encourage international financial institutions to work toward the following:

- **Contributing on the financial, research and regulatory levels to combat HIV and AIDS.** International financial institutions are in a position to lead the way in obtaining information about the impact of HIV and AIDS on national economies and workforces, and specifically health-care providers.

In addition, the forum participants encourage international financial institutions to take the following **action** over the next three to five years:

- **Work with national governments, national nursing associations and ICN to develop nursing labour market policy, health-care policy and population health monitoring mechanisms that will be useful in fighting HIV/AIDS.**

D) NATIONAL NURSING ASSOCIATIONS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES

Forum participants encourage their national nursing associations and ICN to work toward the following:

- **Cooperating with national governments, health-care employers and other interested parties to create a work environment for nurses that is conducive to HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment.** Such a work environment would offer more support to

national nursing association work and to enhancing nursing competence levels needed to care for those living with HIV and AIDS.

In addition, the forum participants encourage national nursing associations and ICN to further invest in the following two **actions** over the next three to five years:

- **National nursing associations can build on their success by continuing to pursue opportunities to work with educational institutions and other interested parties to shape nursing education curricula and continuing education programs on HIV/AIDS.**
- **By strengthening national nursing associations, ICN would enable these associations to pursue the development and implementation of new HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment services.**

III. The Forum: Delivering Messages to Meet the Health Human Resources Challenges of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic

In addition to reviewing the health human resources challenges they face, forum participants developed **key messages** for the **ICN Council of National Representatives Issues Forum** held May 21-23 in Taipei. They also proposed **agenda items** for the **nursing satellite meeting** to be held in conjunction with the **International AIDS Society Conference** in Toronto during August 2006. The following summarizes key messages and agenda items:

- **Given that they form 70 per cent of the global health-care workforce, nurses represent an essential force to ensure the success of any health-care policy.** For this force to be harnessed to provide optimal care to combat HIV/AIDS, nurses require clearly defined roles and responsibilities for themselves and for their nursing directors. For example, at the national level, this means more nurses becoming involved in policy development. At the international level, it means all nations recognizing ICN to give it the credibility necessary to influence the implementation of proposals at the national level.
- **Nurses are natural leaders in any health-care system. Therefore, this leadership role should be cultivated so that nurses can fully contribute to the formulation of health-care policy and the delivery of health-care services to deal with HIV/AIDS.** To accomplish this goal, nurses must work with the national and international groups of players discussed in the previous section. Together, they need to address issues such as:
 - the promotion of nursing as a profession vital to health care;
 - mentorship and leadership training for nurses in health-care delivery and policy development;
 - preventative strategies;
 - ways nurses can best contribute their professional expertise;
 - continuing education for nurses;
 - information technology and electronic communication in nursing; and
 - the practice of nursing in non-hospital settings in co-operation with other workers both in and out of the health-care field.

IV. Future Considerations

The Action in Diversity forum highlighted the need for more cooperation among nurses and other interested parties to overcome HIV/AIDS.

Nurses must work together in strong national nursing associations to gain the knowledge, skills and political force necessary to get the attention of national and international decision-makers in our health-care systems. Once nurses stand united and speak with one voice, the nursing profession will become a more valuable and respected resource in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

During the forum, participants noted that to care for others, nurses must be prepared to care for themselves as a profession. Part of this task is for national nursing associations and ICN to work with national governments, domestic health and international organizations and others to implement forum recommendations, especially in terms of strengthening nursing networks.

To strengthen nursing networks, nurses must continue to talk, to learn and to share information and experiences. The Action in Diversity forum was a good start. Let us continue to work together so that the nursing profession moves closer to its goals at the August 2006 nursing satellite meeting of the International AIDS Society Conference.

V. Conclusion

Nurses form the backbone of most national health-care systems. The global shortage of nurses is one of the greatest obstacles to dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Fortunately, an empowered nursing profession represents one of humanity's greatest hopes for eventually overcoming this scourge.

This report on the Action in Diversity forum shows that nurses around the world are ready to meet the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS, health systems restructuring and internal and international migration. They are ready to do so both within and outside of their national borders.

During the forum, leaders from national nursing associations shared their experiences in dealing with those living with HIV and AIDS. They hoped to start tackling some of the enormous challenges they face by working together. As a result of this collaboration, they identified important focus areas – lessons learned, innovative strategies, actions, policy and research gaps – that the nursing profession will not ignore. Nurses will continue to talk and to work on issues that matter to their profession in order to support and to realize Action in Diversity.

APPENDIX A

Forum Evaluation

What aspects of the forum went well?

- The forum increased the participants' personal self-esteem.
- Good planning and communications helped to make this forum successful.
- Ultimately this forum will help ICN address nursing issues all over the world.
- The forum was based on an organizational process that was worldwide in scope.
- The forum's thematic approach was excellent for information sharing.

What might organizers of future forums consider doing differently?

- More time is required for planning.
- The next meeting should include national nursing association case studies on nursing care for HIV and AIDS patients.
- Discussion summaries should be distributed before the end of the meeting.
- More information should be provided before the meeting.
- The next meeting should deal more with the social, economic and political aspects of HIV and AIDS.

What action(s) should come out of the forum?

- The forum should lead to the development of concrete strategies for the future.
- The forum should establish a directorate and help national nursing associations to partner with CNA and to exchange program information among themselves.
- The forum should lead to the implementation of recommendations by national nursing associations and ICN, especially in the areas of care giving and the strengthening of nursing networks.
- Participants should use the information gained during the forum for workshops and board meetings at home.
- There should be a report of the forum outcomes.
- The forum should lead to national nursing associations working with governments to give nurses political influence and a means of direct participation in HIV and AIDS care policy development.

Appendix B

Canadian Nurses Association



Needs Analysis of Nursing Shortages
in the Context of HIV/AIDS:
Strategies, Gaps and Innovations

*A Discussion Paper for Supporting
Action in Diversity*

*National Nursing Associations on Meeting
The Health Human Resources Challenges of
The Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic*

Taipei, Taiwan

May 20, 2005

Introduction to the Needs Analysis

This discussion paper presents a summary of the findings of a needs analysis of nursing shortages in the context of HIV/AIDS in nine countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) conducted this needs analysis for a forum entitled Action in Diversity: National Nursing Associations Meeting the Health Human Resources Challenges of the Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic that is being held prior to the International Council of Nurses' (ICN) Quadrennial Congress.

ICN identifies the global shortage of health workers, and in particular nurses – who are the backbone of most national health systems – as one of the most significant obstacles to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.¹ The impact of HIV/AIDS, health systems restructuring and internal and international migration are key challenges in the crisis in nursing human resources.

For the present study, a needs analysis was conducted during March and April 2005 with national nursing associations in Zambia, Mozambique, Morocco, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Barbados, Chile, and Nicaragua. Research questions in this three-page needs analysis addressed nursing human resources and HIV/AIDS, exploring policy gaps, strategies and innovations. While country contexts differed (nurse-to-population ratios, HIV prevalence rates, socio-economic status, political structures), nurses across the study countries spoke about similar challenges, although these challenges may manifest themselves in different ways. Fostering collaborative relationships (south-south, south-north, and north-south) to build on the diverse experiences of the nursing profession may offer strategies, policy support and innovations that address some of the global challenges.

National nursing associations were contacted by e-mail, received a copy of the questionnaire in advance and were asked to arrange a time for a telephone interview. Six interviews were conducted in English by one researcher (an external consultant), and CNA staff conducted the other three interviews (two in Spanish and one in French). Respondents were informed that their comments would be recorded. Written notes of all interviews were provided to the consultant. Interviews lasted on average between one and two hours.

Summary of Key Findings

POLICY GAPS:

Similar themes challenge the nursing profession across very different country contexts.

- 1) **The voice of the nursing profession needs to be heard much more strongly so that nurses are better able to influence government decisions, policies and programs.** Nurses in study countries often felt they had little leverage with the government or ministry of health to put forward a nursing perspective or to influence policies on health systems restructuring, HIV/AIDS and health human resources. In many of the study

¹ International Council of Nurses. (2004). *The global shortage of registered nurses: An overview of issues and actions*. Geneva: Author.

countries, nursing issues were addressed indirectly or not at all in current policies, policy directions and financial allocations.

- 2) **Nurses need stronger representation on national HIV and AIDS committees.** These committees often have high-level political support and make decisions and policies that have direct relevance and effect on nursing conditions amidst the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. As health workers who are key to the success and reach of prevention, treatment and care, nurses need to be at the table.
- 3) **There is a negative impact on nursing when countries lack a national health human resources strategy or when strategies lack a specific nursing focus.** In some cases, the health human resources strategies have gone so far as to work to eliminate nursing positions as part of cost-cutting and restructuring (e.g., Taiwan and Nicaragua). Since nurses are front-line health-care providers, policies on health human resources need to consider specifically issues relevant to the nursing workforce.
- 4) **Health human resources strategies, be they at the national or multilateral levels, must address the international migration of nurses and its impact on dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic.** National nursing associations have concerns about the ethical implications of more advantaged areas attracting nurses from less advantages areas and the related implications for local nursing shortages as well as the loss of experienced nurses.
- 5) **Difficult working conditions for nurses complicate the treatment of HIV/AIDS.** These difficulties include low remuneration, high retirement levels, dealing with increasing numbers of patients with HIV and AIDS amidst limited knowledge about this pandemic and inadequate equipment.
- 6) **The global shortage of nurses makes dealing with HIV/AIDS more difficult for the nursing profession.** The historical causes or contributing circumstances for regional and national nursing shortages differ. For example, early health restructuring efforts in Chile and international migration in African countries have created nurse shortages in different contexts. However, all shortages result in heavy workloads for remaining nurses, which make addressing HIV/AIDS more difficult.
- 7) **Challenges in basic nursing education and education upgrading weaken the ability of the nursing profession to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic.** Weak standards and accreditation processes, curricula that exclude important current knowledge and skills (e.g., training on HIV and AIDS) as well as a lack of continuing education processes put nurses at greater risk for infection and work-related poor health and endanger public health.
- 8) **HIV and AIDS are considered serious problems by all of the national nursing associations surveyed.** This is the case despite the fact that prevalence rates ranged from less than one per cent in some areas to 16 per cent and higher in other areas. One respondent in a country with a low prevalence rate described it as a “silent crisis,” and emphasized the importance of averting a potential crisis of the magnitude experienced in Africa.
- 9) **Nurses in many countries believe that they are not adequately prepared to provide quality prevention, treatment and care because of a lack of knowledge and skills.** There are few opportunities for continuing education, and when there is in-service training, nurses often do not received adequate training on HIV and AIDS issues. Particularly noted is a lack of knowledge about universal precautions. Nurses may also be unfamiliar with appropriate care, harm reduction strategies for patients and risk reduction strategies for nurses when dealing with new populations such as intravenous drug users.

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- 10) **As front-line workers, nurses work in high-risk conditions, sometimes without adequate protective equipment.** Their significant role in providing care and their specific occupational health hazards are not being addressed adequately in national policies and programs.

POSSIBILITIES FOR COOPERATION:

There is potential to share and to cooperate among national nursing associations.

Nurses and nursing associations from different contexts have much to offer each other through peer learning about their diverse and common experiences. Areas of strength or innovation in one country can address areas of weakness and challenges raised by nurses in other countries. Note the following examples:

- **Chile** has a long history of nurse leaders who have successfully wielded powerful and convincing arguments with the government to address nursing issues.
- **Barbados** has an innovative and well-regarded model for comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. The country staged a highly successful Year of the Caribbean Nurse that raised the profile of the nursing profession. In addition Barbados has tripartite collaboration between unions, government and the private sector on human resources issues.
- **Taiwan** has the Nurses AIDS Prevention Foundation to protect nurses against HIV infection and provide education to improve the quality of nursing care.
- **Morocco** has been successful in lobbying its government to increase the number of graduates from nursing education programs.
- **Mozambique** collaborates closely with the new Ministry of Health and has ongoing consultations and input into how health, health human resources and HIV/AIDS policies can include a nursing perspective.
- **Ethiopia** has experience with voluntary testing and counselling.
- **Nicaragua** has experience with the integration of HIV/AIDS education into undergraduate nursing curricula and for school children.
- **Zambia's** government recognizes the vital role of nursing and the nursing profession and has witnessed the international support for nursing.
- **Vietnam** has experience with community and home-based care for people living with HIV and AIDS.

All nursing associations have identified specific learning needs for discussion.

During the surveys, the nursing associations stated the following learning needs:

-
- The **creation of a strong and effective voice** for the nursing profession at national and international levels (all)
 - The **critical examination of international nurse migration**, including policy recommendations for health ministries and countries (Chile, Zambia, Barbados)
 - Strategies to deal with the **critical nursing shortage** (Zambia, Ethiopia, Barbados)
 - **Collaboration among nursing associations** (Mozambique, Morocco, Vietnam)
 - Cooperation with **HIV and AIDS national committees to ensure input by nurses** and to improve nursing resources for HIV and AIDS (Vietnam, Mozambique)
 - The strengthening of **nursing capacity and skills to provide quality care** to people living with HIV and AIDS (Nicaragua, Taiwan, Vietnam)
 - The **design of harm reduction programs for people at risk** such as intravenous drug users and **the integration of these programs into curricula** (Taiwan, Vietnam)
 - The development of innovative **outreach strategies** to add to existing repertoire of programs (Barbados)
 - **A role for nurses in decreasing the taboos** in addressing HIV/AIDS (Morocco)

Action in Diversity: Setting the stage for international cooperation

The Action in Diversity forum offers an excellent opportunity for nurses from around the world to grapple with the challenges of the global nursing shortage, health systems restructuring and HIV/AIDS. Here's how nurses can make the most of the forum:

- **Share experiences and knowledge** and identify potential collaborative relationships that could be further explored and deepened after the workshop.
- Use the forum as a **springboard for the joint development of policy proposals and recommendations** that nursing bodies can bring back to their respective country governments and health ministries.
- Develop **strategies to strengthen the voice of the nursing profession**, increase its influence on government decision-making and health policy and help nurses participate fully in domestic and international policy arenas.
- Assemble **resources and lists of experts that nursing associations might use to build capacity on specific issues** (e.g., harm reduction projects; appropriate prevention, treatment and care for new and emerging populations with HIV such as intravenous drug users; safety protocols for nurses working with potentially violent patients).



CANADIAN NURSES ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION DES INFIRMIÈRES ET INFIRMIERS DU CANADA