INTRODUCTION

CICIAMS XX World Congress was held from 4th to 7th September 2018 at the Riverside Majestic Hotel, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.

The theme of the congress, Education for Sustainable Health: Engaging Development, Respecting Life, was inspired by some of the 16 health related United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provided a valuable platform for professional discussion and critical examination of these goals from a Catholic perspective. It was felt that to achieve sustainable health globally people need to be adequately educated and nurses and midwives as major stakeholders in health care were in strong positions to carry out this task.

The congress was hosted by the Catholic Nurses Guild of Malaysia, who were so enthusiastic to welcome over 300 participants from the active regions of CICIAMS namely Europe, Asia, Pan America and the English-speaking Africa. From Europe, there was attendance from Ireland, England and Wales and the Netherlands. Asian countries present were the host Malaysia, Singapore, India, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, Thailand, Hong Kong and Brunei. From Pan America, there were participants from the USA, Mexico and CICIAMS new member association – Canada, while Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, Eswatini Kingdom were present from English – Speaking Africa. A total of 307 participants registered for the congress comprising 137 from Malaysia, and 170 from other countries.

CICIAMS was honoured by the presence of the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development His Eminence Cardinal K. A. Peter Turkson; the Archbishop of Kuching, His Grace Simon Poh; His Grace Most Rev Joseph Salvador Marino, the Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia and Bishop Cornelius Sim, President of the Commission for Pastoral Health Care of the Bishops Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. CICIAMS International Ecclesiastical Assistant, Rev. Fr. Thomas Nairn OFM and national and branch chaplains of some of CICIAMS member associations were also present. In attendance was a past Malaysian Ambassador to the Vatican, Tan Sri Bernard Dom Pok.

OPENING MASS, TUESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2018

The congress opened with a Concelebrated Mass on the evening of Tuesday, 4th September 2018 with His Eminence Cardinal K. A. Peter Turkson as the chief celebrant. In his inspiring homily, Cardinal Turkson said Jesus Christ provided sustainable health and therefore charged Catholic Nurses, as ministers of life, to follow the example of Christ by educating their clients and respecting life. It focused the participants minds and placed the theme of the congress in context.

Mass was followed by a welcome dinner. It was a warm reception of excellent cuisine accompanied by performances of songs and dances by members of the Malaysian Guild which were enjoyed by all. Both the Mass and dinner were fitting starts to the congress. It ended with night prayers.
Wednesday 5th September 2018.

The day commenced with morning prayers.

OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony was quite colourful. It started with the arrival of Mr Datuk. Amar Doughlas, Uggah Embas, the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Modernization of Agriculture, Nature and Regional Development and the procession of the platform party to the hall. The Malaysian and Sarawak anthems were played. A prayer led by Archbishop Simon Poh was followed by a roll call and parade of flags of participating countries. The beating of a ceremonial gong by Mr Datuk Amar Doughlas Uggah Embas and Cardinal Peter K A Turkson marked the formal opening of the congress.

PROFESSIONAL SESSION

Sustainable Development was the theme of the first day

Morning session – International Perspectives

The first keynote speaker was Cardinal Peter K A Turkson who addressed the topic Integral Human Development and the Role of Catholic Nurses in Health Promotion. He said the mission of the Dicastery is to promote the scientific and pastoral response of the Holy See to the question related to human dignity, (justice and peace), development, migration, health care, charitable works, care of creation and apostolates of the See. He described development from a holistic approach and said that development should be all embracing and should not be restricted to economic growth. According to him, development is for all people, is about the whole human person and other feasible models of social integration and does not foment inequality. He said development covers all aspects of life - personal, political, cultural spiritual, social, economic and extends to people of every age.

Cardinal Turkson also reminded participants that the Catholic health care mission is rooted in the healing ministry of Christ in fidelity to the mandate of Christ and after his example, as shown in the Gospels of Luke 9: 2 – 6 and Matthew 10: 1 – 8.

He said Catholic Nurses have a deep and profound calling to serve and provide quality care to all people especially the most vulnerable, advocating and caring for the poor and the marginalized. In doing this he said nurses must take holistic and compassionate approach, recognizing the whole person, his inalienable dignity, rights and needs. He charged participants to respect the sacredness of human life from conception to natural death and to see Christian love as the animating principle of health care and to see healing and compassion as a continuation of the mission of Christ.

The second keynote speaker, Professor Andrew Kiyu of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Services, University of Malaysia, Sarawak, spoke on the topic Nursing and Sustainable Development: our responsibility, our future, our choice. In his presentation, Professor Kiyu identified three pillars of sustainable development namely: economic development, social development and environmental protection. He said these three pillars are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. He listed what needs to be sustained to include nature, ecosystem, resources, our environment, culture, people, economy, society, among others. He identified three levels of roles of nursing in sustainable
development – planet, global, workplace, personal and family. Globally he said the roles are embedded in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In the work place it involves healthcare services while at the personal level we should reduce the amount of waste we create, recycle whenever possible, reuse materials whenever possible and to rethink the materials we use and those we throw away. He encouraged participants to always think globally and to act locally. Professor Kiyu suggested four principles of sustainable clinical practice as identified by the Campaign for Greener HealthCare which include disease prevention and health promotion, patient education and empowerment, lean service delivery, and preferential use of treatment options and medical technologies with lower environmental impacts.

Afternoon Session – Welfare issues of Children and Youth: Regional/National Perspectives

This session took the form of a round table discussion with a speaker from each CICIAMS region. The first speaker from the Association of Catholic Nurses of England and wales, Ms. Janet Muchengwa, spoke on the topic Welfare Issues of Children and Youth - the UK Perspective. Janet in the presentation saw stable family life as paramount for learning and development of children, as well as the healthy functioning of the wider society. She identified difficulty in securing early emotional attachments in families as the result of long term difficulties of children relating with other people and antisocial behaviours. Other factors which contribute to children’s antisocial behaviour included absence of a stable father and women taking serial partners, marital breakdown, social isolation and poverty. She said despite these challenges, professionals such as midwives and health visitors who work with children and their families are always available to ensure better health for children particularly in the foundation years, by addressing risk factors likely to result in future problems. She said safeguarding of children in the UK remains paramount through all levels. Services such as the healthy child programme, among others, have been put in place to safeguard the health and lives of children.

Speaking from the Nigerian perspective, Mrs. Rosalyn Okoobo, said that the Government of Nigeria has put in place many programmes to safeguard the welfare of children and youths. She mentioned some of these that included Enactment of the Child Right Act, inauguration of the Children Parliament, creation of a National Youth Policy, as well as the Ministry of Youth Affairs. She referred to some of the many problems affecting the youths for example poverty, discrimination, child abuse, right to education, child marriage and female genital mutilation. She said the poor economic situation affects the youth more as there is high rate of unemployment which compels some of them to engage in antisocial behaviours such as robbery, kidnapping, drug abuse, cultism and militancy.

Maria Louisa Alvarez Ledeza, from Mexico addressed Childhood and Youth, Victim or Protagonist, of Modernity.

In her presentation, she identified some of the challenges to young people in Mexico, for example violence, child marriage, teen pregnancy, lack of good nutrition and erroneous reproductive health education, a situation she says affects the right of these young ones to enjoy their welfare. She said children and youth suffer injuries resulting from abandonment, rejection, humiliation, betrayal, indifference and injustice. She opined that given this ugly scenario action is needed because addressing the welfare of children and young people is an emergency. She said children must be universally recognized as human beings and “we should leave a better legacy for children and young people”.
Ms Janet Chong from Singapore spoke on *Welfare Issues of Children and Youth in Singapore*. In her paper Ms. Chong said the main areas of focus are children beyond parental control. She cited many acts and conventions used in this regard in Singapore, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Children and Young Person’s Act, Compulsory Education Act, and Youth at Risk Programmes. She said the Ministry for Social and Family Development empowers children and youth by providing them with conducive environment to grow and develop into good citizens and socially responsible adults. She maintained that under the Compulsory Education Act, parents who fail to send their children to school may be guilty of an offense with stipulated penalties ranging from fines and or imprisonment. Protection under the Children and Young Person’s Act safeguards protection, care and rehabilitation of children and young persons who are below the age of 16 years.

She also said in addition to the above, pastoral care is fully integrated throughout the teaching and learning in the structural organization of the school system, to meet the personal and social wellbeing and academic needs of students and staff.

There followed open discussion.

**MASS:** The day ended with a concelebrated mass with the Papal Nuncio to Malaysia, Most Reverend Joseph Salvador Marino, as the chief celebrant. After the Mass, participants went for a cruise and dinner along the Sarawak River.

**DAY2: THURSDAY 6 SEPTEMBER 2018.**

The theme for the day was *Holistic Care*.

The day started with Morning Prayer led by Fr. Aloysius Fidelis, National Chaplain, Catholic Nurses Guild of Malaysia.

It was followed by the first plenary presentation titled *The Catholic Tradition: Respecting the Spirit as we Heal the Body*. The speaker was CICIAMS International Ecclesiastical Assistant, Reverend Father Thomas Nairn OFM. In his presentation, Fr. Nairn quoting from the New Charter for Health Care Workers (Vatican City, 2017) identified nursing as part of the pastoral and evangelising activities of the Church which according to CICIAMS Ethics Guidelines (2014), must be a way of life and as a relationship, and must be practiced using technological and ethical responsibilities. He said in nursing, the dignity of the sick person as well as his/her rights must be respected regardless of circumstances or social status. He said the whole person must be taken account of to include physical, spiritual, emotional and social, since respect and care go together.

He sees the nurse as being in the centre of care, conscience, and respect. He said life is a precious gift from God and must be respected and cared for until its natural completion. These according to the paper implies that the patient should be given spiritual support, must be told the truth and should be provided with whatever information is necessary to help him understand his or her condition.

The second plenary paper was presented by Dr Theresa Cheong, CICIAMS Asian Regional President. It was titled *Promoting Holistic Health Globally*. In her paper, Dr Cheong highlighted some of the efforts made by the United Nations to provide holistic health care globally e.g. the universal definition to health, the Alma Ata declaration of health for all by the year 2000, the involvement of national
governments and other sectors as well as independent organizations and prioritizing health as a vital resource for social and economic development. She identified eight dimensions of wellness, namely: social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, financial, environmental and occupational dimensions.

The third plenary paper was presented by Ms Matseliso (Tshidi) Morighlane from South Africa. It was titled *Achieving Sustainable Societal Mental Health*. She defined mental health as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his/her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make contributions to his/her community. She said causes of mental ill-health are classified into biological and environmental factors. She identified the biological factors as brain structure, genetic neurochemistry or neurochemical, while the environmental factors include chronic stressors like economic hardship, trauma, child abuse, and family or relationship problems. She also said low quality lifestyle due to poverty as well as substance abuse are also etiological factors. She said according to WHO reports, 25% of the total world population suffer from mental or neurological disorder at some point in their lives. She therefore suggested that to reach sustainable mental health there should be policy change in adaptability to community needs, and effective collaborations with all stakeholders. There should be a shift in cultural and societal norms. She also suggested strong leadership as early childhood interventions which focus on social and emotional learning and development.

**Afternoon Session - Round table 2 Welfare Issues of the Elderly – Regional/National Perspectives**

The first speaker of this session was Mrs. Susan McGoldrick from Ireland. In her paper, titled *Welfare Issues of the Elderly: Framework for Positive Ageing - an Irish Perspective*. She said welfare issues of the elderly are among the most important challenges for humankind. Quoting from Dr Gabar of Canada, she said to build a framework for positive ageing in our society, we must ensure positive environment for our children and youths. She also said to care for the elderly, we must be aware of the various physical, mental, spiritual and psychological factors which are so often the conditions in which the elderly find themselves. She said for both children and elderly where they live, learn, work and play have bigger impacts on their health. According to her, policies that are in place where people spend most of their time e.g. homes, offices, schools, communities make it easy or hard to live healthy lives. She identified most of the health issues affecting the elderly to include: malnutrition, cognitive challenges, physical injury, sexually transmitted diseases, sensory impairment, oral health problems, dementia, bladder and bowel challenges. She suggested ten tips for better ageing – exercise, healthy diet, no smoking, social engagement with others that have a positive attitude, regular medical check-ups, protect one’s eyes, avoid exposure to sun, get sufficient good quality sleep, get good financial advice.

The second speaker in this session was Dr Marian Nowak, CICIAMS Pan American Regional President. Her paper was titled *Insuring the Welfare of Elderly in Pandemics, Disasters and Conflicts*. In her presentation, Dr Nowak classified public health emergencies in two – Natural and Man-made. She identified the natural ones as hurricanes, floods, fire, snowfalls, storms and so forth, and cited many countries which have been affected by one natural disaster or the other such as Japan, Philippines, USA. She also highlighted the man-made disasters to include terrorism, toxic spills, explosions. She went on to suggest strategies for care givers of the elderly in times of disasters namely hospital care and community care. She said in caring for the elderly the mind, body and spirit must be considered. She suggested a coalition of care with agencies or groups like Public Health Departments, Ageing Services
Groups, Faith–based and community based organisations, volunteers, social services agencies, transport agencies, registries, and medical facilities.

Dr Gcinile Buthelezi from Swaziland (now Eswatini Kingdom) presented her paper on the **Issues of the Elderly from the Swaziland** perspective. She described the elderly people who are over the ages of 60 years as senior citizens, saying that such people are usually highly respected. She said 5% of the total population of the Eswatini Kingdom, about 55,000, are senior citizens and are well taken care of by the government, by way of free medical services and government appointments. She saw old age as a blessing from God and said one should never be afraid of ageing, but rather should start preparation for old age in the teens.

Dr Buthelezi said the role of a nurse in caring for the senior citizens should emphasise social and personal care, the nurse has responsibility to show kindness and respect for the elderly and to see Christ especially in the elderly.

Professor Sidiah John Siop of Malaysia spoke on the topic **Issues and Challenges of the Old People’s Health**. In her presentation, she identified issues and challenges of older people to include chronic diseases, and co-morbidities, cognitive and memory impairment, functional disability, dependency on health care and ageism. She identified some of the chronic diseases of older people namely: hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, as well as diabetes mellitus. She said diseases like obesity, incontinence, dementia, depression, arthritis, cataract, kidney diseases and cardiovascular diseases are also common.

She however saw religiosity as a key element of strength, hope and disposition in the life of older people and therefore suggested that in caring for these people, spiritual dimension must be taken into consideration. She said a caregiver must listen, provide the needed comfort and must be present in times of pain and suffering to establish a coping strategy as the needs arises. In doing this, their heterogeneity of experiences must be considered regardless of their health status. The caregiver must address the inequalities that underlie their diversity and must avoid ageist stereotypes and preconceptions. She said older people should be empowered to adapt and shape their challenges and social change.

There followed discussion after which there was concelebrated Mass presided over by His Lordship Bishop Cornelius Sim, President, Commission Pastoral Healthcare of the Bishops Conference Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

**Hospitality Night:**

The hospitality night took place at the poolside of the Grand Magherita Hotel, Kuching. It featured songs, dances and display of the rich cultures of the participating countries, as well as dinner and was greatly enjoyed by all. It ended with night prayers.

**Day 3: Friday 7th September 2018**

The day started with morning prayers.

*The Role of Health Care Professionals* was the theme for the day.
Dr Patricia Sayers, USA and CICIAMS Representative to the UN/DPI, was the speaker for the fourth plenary session. Her topic was Nursing Role in Aging Populations, Fertility and Replacement Migration: A Global Update. She defined fertility health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of reproductive disease or infirmity. It deals with the reproductive processes, functions and systems at all stages of life. She said family planning as an aspect of reproductive health is promoted as a key to achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals – economics prosperity, women empowerment, workforce participation, environmental protection, improved material and child health. She observed that reproductive health modalities being promoted in the society violate Catholic and other values, beliefs and teachings and advocated for a change and adoption of modalities in keeping with Catholic teachings such as Billings and Marquette. She specifically highlighted roles of Catholic nurses engaging in fertility health/awareness.

She advocated for certification of nurses in evidence-based methods consistent with Catholic teachings, accessibility and affordability clinics and that services should be cultural sensitive.

For the ageing, she said geriatric nursing skills and services must be expanded. Nurses should promote health and safety in the home environment/communities and suggested the assistance and contributions of the elder nurses in this direction.

She called for the involvement of nurses in planning healthcare systems for migrants and for provision of incentives for nurses who engage in migrant services. For urbanization, she said the presence of Nurses in urban areas should be fortified and that they should be involved in planning.

The third-round table discussion session was on the topic Role of Nurses and Midwives in ensuring Sustainable Public Health Development in the Contemporary World: Regional/National Perspectives.

In her presentation that addressed the Global Perspective of the topic, Mrs. Anne Kabimba, Kenya and CICIAMS Chairperson of the Midwives Committee, said the role of nurses and midwives in public health dates to historical, biblical and political contexts and that these roles start before a woman becomes pregnant and continues through life of the woman and extends to the family and the community, adding that this is a call and a unique type of service. She further said that the roles extend beyond the sick and includes advocacy, community organisation, health education, political, economic and social reforms and collaboration. She identified some public health development indicators namely; socially/mentally articulate health workforce, working health system, quality and equitable maternal health, advocacy, effective communication network, reduction in air pollution, reduction in noise, low infant mortality. She said today nurses and midwives provide care with public health population focus. They also identify health needs and problems and respond to them accordingly. They support populations of all ages with different needs and expectations. She also said the care activities of nurses and midwives in public healthcare include; disease and health protection, outreach/screening, assessment of health needs, referral/follow-up, building community capacity, case management and care planning, health promotion intersectional collaboration and partnership, social marketing and policy enforcement among others.

In doing this according to the paper, they must adapt and adopt the intervention strategies, use evidence-based nursing and midwifery practice and protect the integrity of public health research.
In her presentation titled *A Challenge for every Nursing Profession* Maria de Jesus Arzabata, from Mexico, said health is no longer a personal matter but a public concern because it is essential for the individual, as well as the society. She observed that the international community has in recent times noticed that 3,000 million people live with less than two dollars a day, thereby placing them in extreme poverty and at risk of ill-health. Every year 3 million children under five years of age die because of inadequate health conditions, accidents and intoxications, despite advances made at various levels – national, regional and international. In the Latin America and the Caribbean regions for example, the main challenges as observed by Maria, are related to the high level of inequality, violence and insecurity, thereby making access to education and health services difficult. She said a healthy population is a national resource. Therefore, she believed if nurses at individual and collective levels value their work and focus all their strengths on specific aims of the Sustainable Development Goals. These goals could be achieved. She said to achieve this, nurses must concentrate their efforts on the priority areas with attention on the community.

From the *India Perspective*, Sr. Sarla Macwan, said that the challenges faced in terms of population health and wellbeing are huge and said for this reason every nurse and midwife is called to be an Angel of Mercy. She identified some of the public health challenges that include sexual abuse, natural disasters, violence, poverty and drug abuse. She also pin-pointed patriarchy with its attendant attributes as constituting a major public health challenge which makes the role of nurses and midwives quite demanding. She said nurses need to be adequately trained to be able to face these challenges. She said when the nurse has deepened the understanding of herself and others; she will be the change that she would like to see in others. She sees a nurse as a care provider, educator, advocate, manager, collaborator, leader and researcher. She said public health nurses are trained to carry out the following essential services: monitor the health status of the community to identify potential problems, diagnose and investigate health problems, inform, educate and empower people on health issues especially those at risk, mobilise community partnership, develop plans and policies that support individual and community health, enforce laws and regulations that protect health among others. She called on all Catholic nurses to reflect and think on how to make public health more sustainable.

This round-table session was followed by a *Peace Appeal* from Ms Ikuno Yamaguchi from Japan. It featured a presentation on atomic weapons. In the presentation, Ms Yamaguchi recalled the devastating effects of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and called on world leaders and everybody to do everything possible to prevent a reoccurrence of such a disaster and to discourage the use of all forms of nuclear weapons.

Another interesting session towards the end of the congress as featured the recitation of poems by Ms Bridget Eu, Malaysia. The poem titled *An Art of Empathy in Nursing* was quite interesting and educating. It called on nurses to always be empathetic with their patients.

In her *Review of the Congress*, Dr Khosi Mthethwa, Chairperson of CICIAMS Professional Committee, rounded it all up with a concise summary of the whole congress. The synopsis was a piece of intellectual work. She used the occasion to express appreciation to the members of the Catholic Nurses Guild of Malaysia and congratulated them for successfully hosting the congress.
A vote of thanks on behalf of the participants to the Catholic Nurses Guild of Malaysia was proposed by Mrs Lucy Wang’u Thang’a, President of CICIAMS English Speaking Africa Region. Mrs Wang’s Thang’a paid tribute to the excellent organisation, welcome, hospitality of the hosts, the ideal venue and the accurate information about the choice of accommodation provided prior to the congress.

There followed the announcement of the results of the elections for membership of CICIAMS Executive Board by the International President Ms Geraldine McSweeney, who also chaired this closing session. She announced that in an election conducted during the General Council Meeting of CICIAMS on the 4th September 2018, Mr. Donatus M. Akpan from the Catholic Nurses Guild, Nigeria, was elected to the position of Secretary General and Ms Mary Dolan, from the Irish Catholic Nurses Guild, was elected as CICIAMS Representative to the WHO respectively, both for a second term of office. She also presented the Executive Board members present to the house and thanked them for their commitment to the work of CICIAMS.

The admission of the National Association of Catholic Nurses – Canada as a Member Association of CICIAMS at the General Council Meeting was announced and welcomed.

CLOSING MASS

The closing mass took place at St. Joseph Cathedral, Kuching. His Grace Archbishop Simon Poh, the Archbishop of Kuching, was the chief celebrant. In his homily, he again thanked all participants for accepting to come to Malaysia. He appreciated the Malaysian Catholic Nurses, for their hard work and wished all participants God’s travelling mercies as they returned to their various countries.

Generally speaking, and from comments by many participants, the congress was well organized and successful. The Malaysian Nurses were simply wonderful! To God be the Glory.

Donatus M. Akpan

Secretary General