

# REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

## Report submitted by

Tracy Zambory, SUN — Chair

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# NO BACKING DOWN.

CFNU/2021



## International Solidarity Fund Report

Respectfully submitted by:

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The International Solidarity Fund (ISF) Committee meets twice each year in conjunction with the National Executive Board meetings. In between board meetings, teleconference meetings are also held when required. The committee is quite pleased with our accomplishments since last convention.

To provide core funding to the ISF, one cent per member per month is contributed from monthly CFNU dues. Other funding is achieved through the silent auction that is held at the CFNU Biennium, and we ask Member Organizations to fundraise at their own conventions/AGMs in support of the ISF.

CFNU's International Solidarity Fund, and in particular the expenditures from the fund, have been impacted by COVID. Our fund directs support in three primary areas: Humanitarian, Worker to Worker and Capacity Building.

Included in this report are the financial statements for the Fund for the years 2019 and 2020.

### Humanitarian

#### **Stephen Lewis Foundation and the Swaziland Nurses Association**

The CFNU has, since 2017, had an ongoing relationship with the Stephen Lewis Foundation directing support to their efforts in Africa to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS and, in particular, to support the work of nurses and other health care workers in their efforts. The original commitment was for three years of support – but after a compelling appearance at our 2019 convention by Phetsile Mamba from the Swaziland Nurses Association, we extended our support, at a reduced level, directed specifically to this small but mighty organization.

Of course, in 2020 and 2021 the Swaziland Nurses Association has been required to pivot their work to address COVID as they work to provide support for health care workers. The continued solidarity and support from nurses in Canada through the CFNU and its Member Organizations makes it possible for the SNA to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on HCWs and, by extension, the community at large.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation has provided us with a short report included in this package.

## **Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)**

In 2019 the CFNU made a contribution to the Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) specifically in support of their response to Tropical Cyclone Idai that hit Mozambique and other parts of Southern Africa.

MSF has a great deal of expertise in responding to medical and humanitarian emergencies, and their presence on the ground around the globe puts them in an excellent position to respond rapidly. Rapid and effective response to emergencies is at the core of their work.

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) was already present in Beira when the cyclone struck, and they launched their emergency response almost immediately afterwards. Their teams on the ground carried out many critical medical activities.

In 2020 the CFNU also made a contribution to the work of MSF – but this time directed at their efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the new coronavirus spread, touching virtually every country in the world, MSF adapted or scaled up our ongoing activities and started new activities in many countries over the course of the first six months of 2020.

They committed substantial resources to developing dedicated COVID-19 projects, maintaining essential health care in our existing programs, and accompanying ministries of health in preparing to and/or facing the pandemic. This support was often in the form of training in infection prevention and control, health promotion and organisation of health care services.

## **Capacity Building**

This portion of our fund is typically used to support the organizing and mobilizing efforts of sister unions or labour organizers around the world.

In 2019 the fund was able to support important efforts by the Ugandan Nurses and Midwives Association to mobilize, sensitize and recruit members.

The fund was also able to support the Filipino Nurses United with prohibitive costs associated with the participation of rural and remote nurses in their congress so they could share their stories and benefit from the support, solidarity advocacy and voice of the union.

## **Worker Exchange**

The CFNU is proud to be able to provide small grants to our members in support of their efforts to contribute to medical delegations and community service trips in the global south. These grants are approved in advance of travel – and paid out when the member has completed their trip and upon submission of a report. Samples of these reports are included below.

**Applications for support must be received by December 31 for travel in the following year, which is a critical requirement that must be met.**

With less than usual travel in 2020, this area of this portion of the fund was underspent in 2019 and 2020 – but the Committee looks forward to resuming this support when travel becomes accessible again.

## Bomet, Kenya

May 2019

This year I was able to celebrate ten years of international travel and volunteerism with a medical mission trip to Kenya. This trip was very important to me as it combined my professional skill set of PICU (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit) critical care nursing while allowing me to revisit a community I had previously volunteered in before I had any specialized skills.

In May 2011, I volunteered with Habitat for Humanity's Global Village program. This trip had a strong focus on a cultural exchange and showing solidarity across nations. I developed a love of the land, its people, and had the opportunity to show support for others through working alongside each other for a common purpose.

When the opportunity to return to Bomet, Kenya, as a nursing professional arose, it felt like a sign! With almost the exact same travel dates, except eight years later, it felt comforting to know that I'd even be coming back to the same weather and season! With the support of the CFNU International Solidarity Grant, I once again arrived in Nairobi with a group of Canadians scattered from across the country, whom I had no personal relationship with prior to leaving.

We traveled more than four hours by vehicle to reach Tenwek Mission Hospital and begin preparation for the types of patients we would operate on and recover post-operatively for the week. It was important for the team to do surgeries that were relevant to the growth and development of the local team, rather than flying in and out without creating sustainability. The long-term goal is a medical centre that is able to independently continue surgeries on pediatric congenital abnormalities, in addition to the rheumatic valve disease and adult patients they currently see.



Taking this trip to Bomet, Kenya, enabled me to participate in an exchange of knowledge and culture. We were able to discuss the political systems, weather and vastness of the land that each country had. We were able to discuss the challenges of work-life balance and the way we spend our days off. We were able to share in our fear of a child who might not survive, and offer each other support, snacks and the international nursing staple: caffeine. This trip held so much history and significance for me on a personal and professional level, and I am thankful for the people and organizations that helped me get there.

Shellie Severson

United Nurses of Alberta (UNA)



## Moose Jaw International Medical Mission – Patzun, Guatemala

February 2020

We were able to complete our mission and returned home just before the COVID 19 pandemic began here in Canada. I am sure you can understand as health care professionals how unique the times have been. Anyhow, I would like to give you a short recap of my time in Patzun, Guatemala, past February.

This was my 5th year taking a team to Guatemala to work alongside a small rural hospital in a little city named Patzun. This year our team consisted of 33 volunteers, who were able to accomplish an astounding amount of work!

My role on the team is as team leader, but most of my work for the week was in the operating room, or as recovery room support, and one day on the stove team doing house calls, while the others installed stoves and taught people how to use their new water filter.



One of my favourite aspects of this year's team was that we brought along a nurse with the specific goal of teaching the women who came to meet us about feminine hygiene and their periods. We were given hundreds of Days for Girls kits to share with the ladies we met, and it was a huge hit with them. Every woman on our team participated in the Days for Girls training, and I think it was one of the most impacting parts of our mission.

One moment that stands out for me was when one of the male leaders in a small rural mountaintop village was moved to tears as he was thanking us for “not forgetting about the women” in his home.

Another highlight for me is meeting the patients and their families after surgery. I am always blown away by their gratefulness. They care for each other so well, and as we have come to learn, these surgeries are life-changing for the patients as well as their families. The patients are now able to get back to working or caring for their children like they wanted to. They have hope and a chance at health for a better life. It's so very rewarding to be part of something like this.

This has been quite the year with the global pandemic affecting every area of the world, and Guatemala is no different. Although they are still in desperate need of help, we are not presently planning another mission for 2021. Our goal is to physically return as soon as we can safely do so, but until that time, our team has committed to sending monthly donations so that the clinic we work out of can continue to help the community during this time.

Jackie Wilson

Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN)



## Update to CFNU and its Member Organizations from the Stephen Lewis Foundation March 2021

Since 2017, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and its Member Organizations have partnered with the Stephen Lewis Foundation to provide vital support to the Swaziland Nurses Association (SNA) in Eswatini for their Wellness Centre. The Wellness Centre was founded to address the difficult working conditions that health care workers (HCWs) face in Eswatini, including the psychosocial burden of caring for clients and for family members affected by HIV, vulnerability to TB infection, and long hours that make accessing health services especially difficult. The Wellness Centre provides health and wellness services to HCWs through vital training, medical care and psychosocial support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the challenges facing HCWs in Eswatini both personally and professionally. As CFNU members know all too well themselves, nurses and other HCWs have been called upon to provide additional services to the community during this pandemic, including screening and testing for COVID-19, at the same time that their mental health and well-being is threatened by fear, stress and anxiety related to the coronavirus itself, and to the impacts of lockdowns on their professional and personal lives. In Eswatini there have been critical shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), which adds to the physical risks and emotional strain that HCWs face.

“COVID-19 has brought a lot of psychological instability among health care workers as they are frontliners. With the psychological care services provided, **health care workers were able to pick themselves up and go to face the challenges at the workplace.**”

– Swaziland Nurses Association

The SNA has pivoted its programming to meet the changing needs of HCWs during COVID-19 and to comply with lockdown restrictions. In the first few months of the pandemic, the SNA conducted 48 outdoor workshops for HCWs and the staff of the Wellness Centre about COVID-19 prevention, including the correct wearing, removing and washing of cotton masks; proper hand washing; physical distancing; and isolation. Throughout the pandemic, they have continued to offer psychosocial support and counseling, treatment for non-communicable diseases, screening and treatment for tuberculosis, and HIV testing and counseling. Of the HCWs that the SNA supports, more than 800 are living with HIV. The SNA continues to report a 97% treatment adherence rate for its clients living with HIV, an accomplishment that exceeds the national average and is of vital importance to reducing the vulnerability of people living with HIV to COVID-19.

“The **issues of PPE shortage have been a countrywide problem**, and at the Wellness Centre we are grateful to SLF for providing support in the procurement of PPE and other supplies for the staff.”

– Swaziland Nurses Association

Even with the support provided by SNA’s Wellness Centre, health care workers in Eswatini continue to be at a disproportionate risk of acquiring COVID-19 due to their work on the front lines of the pandemic. SNA recently reported that Eswatini is in the midst of a second wave of the pandemic, and that ten health care workers in the small country died in just one month due to COVID-19. **The continued solidarity and support from nurses in Canada through the CFNU and its Member Organizations makes it possible for the SNA to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on HCWs and, by extension, the community at large.**



With support from the SLF and the CFNU, the Swaziland Nurses Association has been able to provide PPE to staff at their Wellness Centre.

Photo provided by the Swaziland Nurses Association.

**International Solidarity - As of December 31, 2020**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Opening Fund Balance - December 31</b>	<b>152,622.86</b>	<b>211,091.38</b>
<b>Revenue</b>		
SUN	1,000.00	5,412.50
NBNU	200.00	4,037.50
NSNU	2,000.00	6,150.00
RNUNL	1,500.00	4,000.00
UNA	3,000.00	3,000.00
MNU	300.00	2,400.00
PEINU	-	2,190.00
CFNU Convention	-	7,810.00
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<b>8,000.00</b>	<b>35,000.00</b>
Dues allocation	15,442.17	15,425.42
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>23,442.17</b>	<b>50,425.42</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
<b>Humanitarian Assistance</b>		
Stephen Lewis Foundation	25,000.00	64,000.00
South Africa trip with SLF	-	5,788.20
MSF/Doctors Without Borders	5,000.00	14,000.00
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<b>30,000.00</b>	<b>83,788.20</b>
<b>Worker-to-Worker</b>		
UNA	2,500.00	5,000.00
NBNU		500.00
NSNU	500.00	500.00
MNU		500.00
RNUNL	-	-
PEINU	-	-
SUN	2,000.00	
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<b>5,000.00</b>	<b>6,500.00</b>
<b>Capacity-Building</b>		
Filipino Nurses United	-	5,014.74
Uganda Nurses & Midwives	-	13,591.00
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<b>-</b>	<b>18,605.74</b>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>35,000.00</b>	<b>108,893.94</b>
<b>Net Increase (Decrease)</b>	<b>(11,557.83)</b>	<b>(58,468.52)</b>
<b>Closing Fund Balance - December 31</b>	<b>141,065.03</b>	<b>152,622.86</b>