

# Lots done, more to do

The INMO has been instrumental in supporting the establishment of the Ethiopian Wellness Centre for healthcare workers

MUCH progress has been made on the establishment of the Ethiopian Wellness Centre for healthcare workers, a project supported by the INMO in collaboration with the Ethiopian Nurses Association (ENA) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN).

The centre is being built as part of the ICN's Wellness Centre for Health Care Workers Programme, which aims to strengthen health systems through the provision of quality, comprehensive health services for all cadres of healthcare workers and their immediate families in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Over the past six years, the programme has proved a cost-effective and innovative intervention, addressing the severe health crisis in much of Africa. The centres provide dedicated services and have improved the lives and touched the hearts of thousands of healthcare workers and their families. The centres progress the quality of healthcare in the countries where they operate by looking after health workers so they can provide care for their communities.

Since its inauguration in Swaziland in 2006, the initiative has been implemented in Lesotho, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and now Ethiopia. The programme is managed by the national nurses associations in the relevant country. It is supported by ICN and the national nurses associations of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Ireland (INMO), Becton, Dickinson Corporation (BD), the President Emergency Fund, US (PEPFAR), and the Stephen Lewis Foundation, in collaboration with the ministries of health in the implementing countries.

I first visited Ethiopia in 2008 as INMO president with INMO executive council member, Mary O'Connor, and returned in 2009 with Mary and Annette Kennedy, INMO director of professional development. In 2010, at a meeting of the ICN in Geneva the concept of the INMO's collaboration on the wellness centre programme was agreed in principle. Following the endorsement by the INMO Executive Council to support the initiative and provide initial funding over three years, the Organisation signed a Memorandum of

Understanding with the ENA and ICN. Since then, we have worked with all stakeholders to make the programme a reality.

## Healthcare crisis

The health human resource crisis in Ethiopia is among the worst in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are 70,064 health workers serving about 82 million people there. There is one physician per 53,452 people and one nurse per 2,762 people (FMOH, health and health-related indicator 2011).

Health workers in Ethiopia often feel undervalued and overlooked. Their workplaces are overwhelmed by contagious diseases, while the risk of acquiring blood bore pathogens, such as HBV, HCV, HIV and TB, while providing patient care, is high. This is due to the insufficient protective equipment, surveillance and poor working environments.

Stress, burn out, high attrition rates and migration are common among healthcare workers. They desperately need dedicated health and wellness services to strengthen their health and their capacity to serve the people of Ethiopia. While progress has been slow, "buy in" to the wellness centre programme has been great from all partners including the Ministry of Health, Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Embassy in Ireland and INMO members.

In 2011, I had the opportunity to visit the Swaziland Wellness Centre. The trip allowed me to see how, with very little, a lot can be achieved. What I loved about the centre was the concept that no one there knew what anyone was visiting for – all treatments were conducted in one room. So, whether they were visiting for HIV drugs, TB treatment, stress management or blood checks, no one else knew. The two outreach buses at the centre allow nurses to reach the surrounding rural areas. The centre also incorporates a garden, which facilitates healing and provides vegetables and fruit. Gardens like these are an integral part of all wellness centres.



*Pictured at the Irish Embassy in Ethiopia (l-r): Prof Assrat Demessie, past president of ENA and board member; Sheila Dickson, INMO private sector organiser; Aiden O'Hara, Irish Ambassador; Yayneabeba Tadesse, director of EWC; Linda Carrier Walker, ICN; and Tafesse Bekele, ENA president*



*The new Ethiopian wellness centre will be developed in this building at Alert Hospital in Addis Ababa*

I travelled to Ethiopia in January with Linda Carrier Walker, director of the ICN wellness centre programme, to meet with the ENA, the ministry of health, the PEPFAR Ethiopia team, and the Irish ambassador, and also to attend an advisory board meeting of the EWC. A new building has now been identified for the wellness centre at Alert Hospital in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, following problems with the original site.

Sister Yayneabeba Tadesse, director of Ethiopian Wellness Centre, has already trained 140 nurses in TB and drug resistant TB education programmes. The ENA has almost completed a needs analysis survey, which will determine the services that will initially be delivered at the centre. Because of the sheer size of Ethiopia, satellite centres and outreach vehicles are planned for the facility for the future.

In supporting the EWC, the INMO will work with the ENA to also strengthen the organisation. So colleagues, if you are planning your trip abroad to volunteer your skills in the future, maybe it can be in the Ethiopian Wellness centre.

**Sheila Dickson is the private sector organiser of the INMO**