

Evaluation of the NCFI World Congress 2024 27-30 June 2024. Málaga, Spain

The Nurses Christian Fellowship International (NCFI) World Congress held in Málaga, Spain, from 27-30 June 2024, and was a remarkable global event aimed at empowering Christian nurses and midwives. With the theme **Strength and Courage to Care: God's Love and Resources for Nurses and Midwives**, the Congress provided an opportunity for nurses and midwives to reflect on their calling and draw on their faith for strength and courage. The event offered both spiritual and professional nourishment. Additionally, the Congress fostered global networking, collaboration, and spiritual renewal for healthcare professionals.

An evaluation survey was sent to participants two weeks after the Congress to gather feedback on various aspects of the event, which offers valuable insights into its success. A total of 57 participants completed the evaluation survey. Of those, 88% are part of a national fellowship in their respective countries, reflecting a strong connection between the Congress attendees and national fellowships. Notably, 63% of respondents attended the pre-congress course, which was a key offering.

Attendance

- *Pre-congress = 122*
- *Congress = 259*
- *Non-delegates = 24*

Of these...

- *Next Gen = approx. 30 (~10%)*
- *Retirees = approx. 50 (~17%)*
- *First-time Attendees = 105 (~35%)*

Theme and Its Relevance

The theme, Strength and Courage to Care, proved highly relevant, especially in light of ongoing global healthcare challenges. Nurses and midwives, having faced immense pressures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing healthcare crises, appreciated the focus on God's love and spiritual resources as the foundation for compassionate care. The Congress successfully connected faith and professional practice, offering attendees spiritual encouragement and practical tools for sustaining their work in high-stress environments. The overall Congress content received an average score of **3.8/4**, demonstrating that participants found the topics both relevant and valuable to their field of work or study. This indicates a strong alignment between the Congress themes and the professional needs of Christian nurses and midwives.

Registration Process

The registration process utilizing Whova as the registration platform for the NCFI World Congress was well-structured and user-friendly. The Congress website provided clear instructions for potential attendees, including detailed information about fees, deadlines, and payment options. Early-bird registration discounts were available, offering financial incentives for early sign-ups.

Online registration was straightforward, with most attendees reporting a smooth experience. The portal allowed participants to select from various packages depending on their preferences, including options for full conference access or single-day attendance. Email notifications were timely, and support was available for anyone encountering issues during the process. However, a few attendees mentioned challenges in navigating the registration portal, particularly for those less familiar with online platforms, suggesting that additional user support could be beneficial.

Organizer notes:

- Once the registration was set up, it required one person to monitor it approximately 3 times/week. There were a number of people who had trouble registering which required follow-up emails and, in some cases, online meetings to help resolve the issues they were facing. There were some language translation issues that required referral to native speakers to resolve.
- The registration form did not include arrival and departure information, nor was it set up for people to amend their registration by adding arrival and departure information at a later stage. This information is only important if: (1) NCFI is arranging transportation to/from the venue and (2) people are arriving on days outside of the normal arrival times.
- The registration form didn't include any questions about special diets or mobility needs.
- The registration form didn't include any questions about preferences for the local tour (i.e., walking or bus tour)
- To address the above two issues, we sent out Google surveys. We only got a partial response, but enough to be able to plan.
- There was an incident where a fake NCFI Congress registration website was set up and a few people scammed. It is therefore important in our promotional information to remind applicants to check the prices and correct website address.

Sponsorships Support and Attendance

The Congress offered some sponsorships and financial aid options, especially for attendees from low-income countries. This was essential to the success of the congress and fulfillment of

our mandate, as it allowed broader participation, ensuring a more diverse and inclusive gathering.

NCFI provided sponsorships to 40 participants from diverse countries, supporting attendance at both the pre-congress and main congress. Of these sponsorship recipients, 25 people received full sponsorship covering both the pre-congress and main congress, while 15 received support for the main congress alone. Importantly, **8 of these recipients (20%) were members of the Next Generation**, reflecting the organization's commitment to nurturing emerging leaders.

- Sponsorship recipients hailed from 17 different countries, including India, Nepal, Pakistan, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Indonesia, Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, Turkey, Mongolia, Spain, Romania, Cuba, Colombia, and Cameroon. This diverse representation enhanced the Congress's global perspective and enriched the fellowship among attendees.

However, despite these efforts, **17 sponsorship recipients could not attend** the Congress due to barriers in obtaining flight support or visa approvals. This highlights ongoing challenges for global participation and underscores the need for more robust logistical support and collaboration with consulates or sponsors to facilitate future attendance for participants facing such obstacles.

Organizer's note:

- The early deadline for sponsorships required good advance advertisement.
- An application form was required for those wanting sponsorships. Most completed it correctly, although some people required follow-up for incomplete sections (e.g., reference letters). The registration committee decided not to require a deposit as the set-up was difficult in Whova (our registration platform).
- A sponsorship committee reviewed the applications first at the regional level, and then internationally to determine the most appropriate sponsorship fund (i.e., general sponsorship or VE Sponsorship).

Visa

The visa process was a significant factor for many international attendees, particularly those from outside the Schengen Area. The Congress organizers provided clear guidance on visa requirements, including specific information for attendees from countries needing visas to enter Spain. However, obtaining a visa could still be a lengthy and sometimes complex process for some participants.

The Congress organizers issued invitation letters to facilitate the visa application process, which was a helpful step. Nonetheless, there were reports from some participants about delays in visa approval, largely due to processing times at their local embassies. Attendees who applied well in advance generally had fewer issues, while those applying closer to the event found the process more stressful.

Organizer recommendation:

- For delegates requiring visas, if they have not received one 2 weeks or more in advance, we recommend that they withdraw their application as last-minute approval is unlikely.
- It might be worth including information in our promotional material that going with a local, trusted visa company to arrange their visa application might be worth the extra cost for delegates from some countries.

Pre-Congress Course Evaluation

The evaluation of the pre-congress course revealed highly positive feedback. Participants rated the content of the pre-congress course with an average score of 3.9/4, indicating that it was perceived as excellent. The clarity and understandability of communication prior to the course were also rated highly, with a score of 3.7/4. These evaluations suggest that both the content and communication surrounding the pre-congress course were well-received, contributing significantly to the overall Congress experience.

Key Sessions and Topics

When asked about *the most valuable content*, 43.9% of respondents selected the **Bible exposition** by Fernando Ramos as the highlight, reflecting the spiritual depth that many participants valued. Other notable sessions included those led by Dr. Marsha Fowler (17.5%) and Dr. Wilfred McSherry (10.5%), both of whom brought crucial insights into faith and healthcare practice.

The quality of concurrent sessions was rated at 3.73/4, affirming the strong content delivery across various workshops and presentations. Participants appreciated the breadth of topics and the expertise of the presenters.

Spiritual Experiences

The Congress included morning devotion and prayer sessions, which were well-received with an average score of 3.5/4. These times of spiritual reflection were integral to the Congress's mission of integrating faith with professional practice.

Networking and Fellowship

The Congress also facilitated a rich exchange of ideas and fostered a sense of global fellowship. Christian nurses and midwives from diverse cultural backgrounds were able to engage in meaningful dialogue and prayer. The networking sessions were well-organized, giving attendees opportunities to share experiences, form connections, and discuss faith-driven approaches to healthcare. Participants praised the Congress for providing ample opportunities to network. Many felt they had valuable time to connect with peers, exchange ideas, and form new partnerships. This aspect of the Congress was an important factor in its success, as many attendees come for both professional and spiritual connections. Feedback also indicated satisfaction with the venue, which was well-suited to the Congress needs, and with how the event was organized overall. The average score for the Congress experience was 3.7/4, reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the event's overall execution.

Cultural Experience

Málaga, with its deep cultural heritage and Mediterranean ambiance, provided an inspiring environment for both spiritual reflection and cultural exploration. The Spanish Cultural Evening was another highlight, scoring 3.8/4. The event allowed participants to experience local culture and build relationships in a more informal and celebratory setting, enhancing the overall experience.

Areas for Improvement

Despite the overall success, some areas for improvement were highlighted in the survey. A recurring theme was the desire for more programming aimed at younger generations, with several participants suggesting the use of social media to attract and engage these groups. This feedback presents an opportunity for future NCFI Congresses to adapt their programs to be more inclusive of younger healthcare professionals, ensuring the sustainability of the fellowship.

Another area for improvement was transportation logistics. Several participants mentioned the need for clearer communication regarding transportation, suggesting that more detailed instructions or better coordination could enhance the experience for future events.

The translation app generally worked well, although it put a strain on wifi use and required a request for those not using translation to not use the main room wifi during main sessions. Translation for pre-congress was limited and there was no wifi in some breakout rooms, thus some people changed groups. Future consideration includes how to facilitate translation for sessions outside of the keynote/main presentations (i.e., pre-congress courses, concurrent sessions) and ensuring wifi is available in breakout rooms.

Future Participation and Involvement

Most participants (79%) expressed an interest in attending future NCFI Congresses, though 20% indicated uncertainty. A promising 43% of survey respondents expressed a desire to be part of the planning team for future events, showing an eagerness to contribute to the growth and success of NCFI.

Conclusion

Overall, the NCFI World Congress 2024 in Málaga was a successful and enriching event, providing Christian nurses and midwives with both spiritual nourishment and professional insights. The Congress was well-organized, with engaging content and a strong sense of community. While the registration process was efficient, minor improvements could be made in user support for online registration. Visa-related challenges posed an obstacle for some international attendees, but with early preparation and the help of the organizers, most were able to navigate the process successfully. The Congress offered attendees the spiritual strength and practical courage to continue their vital work, firmly rooted in their faith.

The Congress received high marks for its content, organization, and opportunities for networking and spiritual growth. The pre-congress course and Bible exposition were particularly well-received, alongside meaningful contributions from expert speakers. While there are areas for improvement, particularly in engaging younger generations and improving logistical communication, the Congress was widely regarded as a success. Most participants are enthusiastic about attending future NCFI Congresses and contributing to their planning, signaling a bright future for this global community. Praise God!

Written and Submitted by Juni Sinaga

26 October 2024