

Editorial

Nurses: A voice to lead – Health for All



2019 is a very interesting and exciting year for South Africa. We have the wonderful opportunity to have our voice heard in the National Elections on 8 May 2019. To be part of the decision making, we can have our voices heard and therefore actively be part of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) theme for International Nurses Day 2019, namely Nurses: A voice to lead – Health for All.

“In 1977, the World Health Assembly decided that the main social target of governments and of WHO should be the attainment by all the people of the world by the year 2000 of a level of health that would permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life. In other words, as a minimum, all people in all countries should have at least such a level of health that they are capable of working productively and of participating actively in the social life of the community in which they live.” (<https://www.who.int/whr/1998>) The role of women in achieving this target was recognised and, although in 2019 we are still striving to reach Health for All, the importance of the voice of nurses in health is emphasised.

How can you as a nurse be a Voice to Lead? Nurses have, at all levels and in all places of work and life, a pivotal role to play in achieving national health goals as well as in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ICN explains that there are three ways in which you as a nurse can be a Voice to Lead, firstly as an individual where you must realise that your sphere of influence is extensive and



World health organization: sustainable development goals
Source: <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/sustainable-development-goals>

reaches individuals, families, communities, managers, clinicians and governments. Secondly, as profession and the influence of National Nursing Associations in bringing the nursing profession together and to facilitate change at both a national and global scale. The third way is as part of the multidisciplinary team where nurses, as part of this team, must work closely together and with others outside of the health services to bring about long-lasting change. (<https://www.icnvoicetolead.com/become-a-voice-to-lead/>)

The ICN's toolkit for 2019 aims to raise awareness amongst the nursing profession of what the SDGs are and why they matter. It also aims to raise awareness amongst the population, governments and other decision makers of the contributions nurses are already making to achieve the SDGs. To increase the awareness of nurses' unique and continuing contribution in the achievement of SDGs, each nurse's story must be heard.

Nurses must show others the amazing work that they do to improve access to health care, educate populations, innovation, community involvement, policy changes and every other goal in the SDGs.

The SDGs are a roadmap that lays out the vision for a healthy, peaceful and prosperous world. But these goals can only be achieved if things are done differently and, as nurses, we have an especially important part to play. Professional Nursing Today is awaiting the stories of our nurses and it will publish the special stories as a series to raise the awareness as well as to assist nurses to be A Voice to Lead. "Our voice is the voice of the individuals, families, groups and communities with whom we work. Our voice is the voice of more than 20 million nurses around the globe. It is a voice to lead in the transformation of our world." (<https://www.icnvoicetolead.com/sdgs/nurses-role/>)

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