



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT**

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 12 OCTOBER 2009

**Subject : COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION ANNUAL
REPORT**

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the outcome of a Commonwealth Scholarship Commission visit in November 2007.
- 1.2 The Commission has recently published its Annual Report, in which Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (TWEPU) is given thanks from Hilary Limo, a Kenyan student who visited Tyne and Wear in 2007.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members may recall a previous report to Committee in March 2008, which outlined the purpose of Limo's visit. Hilary Limo, a Senior Public Health Officer with the Kenyan Health Ministry visited the region to learn about public health practices.
- 2.2 The visit was funded and organised through a scheme called the Commonwealth Professional Fellowship which formed part of his professional qualification scholarship in Kenya. Limo spent most of his time in the UK visiting local authorities to learn about good practice in public health.
- 2.3 The EPU was visited by Limo in November 2007 following his attendance at an EPU-run Mass Fatalities Core Training Module which was held on 23 October 2007. A further visit to the EPU was subsequently requested to discuss general emergency planning arrangements and to learn in more detail about how we plan effectively for incidents involving mass fatalities in Tyne and Wear.
- 2.4 Limo returned to Kenya in mid December following a three month stay in the UK. Unfortunately, his return coincided with the widespread violence and political unrest across Kenya, following disputed elections, which began in December 2007. Over 1000 people were killed in Kenya in horrific violence and an estimated 150,000 people fled western provinces to seek refuge in their ancestral homelands of Nairobi and Central

province. Vicious attacks at the height of the unrest in the area saw dozens hacked to death because of their political beliefs or ethnic group.

- 2.5 Limo and his colleagues were directly involved in supporting these people and his officers are being trained by Limo using, in small part, the methods and guidance provided by EPU staff.

3. COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

- 3.1 Recent correspondence from Limo's UK mentor provided a link to the annual report published by the Commonwealth. This had been sent with a request to have the document forwarded to the EPU. A copy of the email is contained in Appendix A.

In the email, praise was also given to Gateshead Council, as information given to council staff about pandemic influenza had been shared with Kenyan colleagues and utilised effectively in spreading messages about pandemic flu.

- 3.2 The annual report is titled 'The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom, 49th Annual Report to the Secretary of State for International Development' and relates to the year ending 30 September 2008.

- 3.3 The report includes several case studies from scholarship placements around the world. Limo's entry is detailed in the extract below:

'Emergency planning programmes were not taken seriously by policymakers, NGOs and other providers in Kenya, but UK institutions and professionals prepared me fully to deal with emergencies. Post-election violence in Kenya was a wakeup call to practicing environmental health officers, and the first week of January 2008 was critical for me, as I decided to apply the skills I had learned on award in the UK despite being faced with many challenges.

'The situation on the ground was very complex because my own community was fighting with other communities and my intervention was interpreted in different ways. I was more enthusiastic than ever when I realised that my intervention provided hope to vulnerable groups, and I engaged my learnt skills to plan for a coordinated response. My priorities were provision of shelter, water, sanitation facilities and food for internally displaced persons, mainly under-fives, women, elderly people with terminally ill conditions and people with disabilities.

'My supervisor at the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit reminded me on several occasions that the cardinal rule of emergency preparedness is to be able to satisfy the basic

right of people to life with dignity. This statement has been and will remain my driving force in an emergency situation.

'My future plan is to link up with government agencies, NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders in planning for emergencies. I participated in the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation 2008-2012 strategic planning, where I pleaded with senior colleagues to factor in emergency and disease control strategies. The strategy was captured and we hope to roll out training soon.'

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Given that the student had spent a relatively short amount of time with emergency planners at TWEPU (- most of his time in the UK was spent with environmental health officers), the extremely violent situation which erupted in Kenya meant that the emergency planning skills and advice gained from his visit to TWEPU were immediately applied in the most tested of circumstances, in order to co-ordinate and train responding personnel working at the refugee camps.
- 4.2 It is pleasing to note that the limited contact time with TWEPU was of such assistance and that this has been formally acknowledged in the Commonwealth Scholarship Commissions report to the Secretary of State for International Development.
- 4.3 It is also pleasing to note from the attached email that the Pandemic advice from Gateshead Council was also of some help in Kenya's more recent preparations for H1N1 virus.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A

From:(name of officer)

Sent: 22 July 2009 17.54

To:(officer at EPU)

Subject: Hilary Limo Kenya

Hello... (name of officer),

I thought you may be interested in an article in the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Annual report that has just been published. Limo and I have just received the hard copy and the online version can be found at:

<http://www.cscuk.org.uk/docs/cscukannrep49.pdf>

The article is on page 11 of the report (page 13 of the pdf file). I'm sure you will pass on his good wishes to all at T&WEPU.

I'm regularly in contact with him and know the difficulties he has been experiencing recently having to deal with Cholera and polio outbreaks in the remote northern border areas with Sudan.

He now has responsibility for H1N1 and is anxious that proper advice is given so as to avoid panic arising. He clearly understands the need for good communication and as I knew he had little back up, I simply forwarded the Q & A advice given by Gateshead Council, which was exactly what he wanted and saved him considerable effort in preparing it all himself. My son is in Kenya at the moment looking at the blood service there, all the arrangements having been made by Limo and his colleagues in the ministry of health.

Limo also emailed me:

Hi ... (name of officer),

*I am emailing to inform you of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Annual Report, a copy of which was sent to me .**My story is featured in page 11, kindly share the same with the management of Tyne &Wear Emergency Planning Unit & CIEH NE.***

Dr John Kirkland Executive Secretary and the editorial members were kind enough to publish my story in the Annual Report.

Cheers

Limo

Best Regards

...(name of officer)