

# Healthlinks newsletter

## Report backs Health Links

**THE** long awaited report from Lord Crisp, "Global Health Partnership: The UK contribution to Health in Developing Countries" was published on 13th February 2007. Following intensive consultation, Lord Crisp's conclusions demonstrate how the UK's experience and expertise in health could be used to support developing countries.

"The UK and other developed countries also need to grasp the opportunity – and see ourselves as having a responsibility as an employer of a global health workforce. We need to support a massive scale up of training, education and employment of health workers in developing countries," said Lord Crisp. "In turn, the UK will benefit – this is a two-way process. UK health professionals have much to learn from working with people in developing countries. Building stronger relationships across the globe will also stand the UK in good stead in a changing and risky world."

THET is recognised within the report for its role in developing Health Links (Links) between health organisations and is acknowledged as the obvious vehicle to expand such health partnerships. With support from DFID, THET will be able to take Links to the next level.

The key recommendations of the report are very encouraging



Lord Crisp with Auxiliary Nurse Midwives, India.

for the NHS as a whole. The report suggests that an NHS framework for international development should be created and Government ministers are being asked to affirm support for the involvement of NHS organisations in international development. Also, in order to encourage Trust Boards to embrace Health Links work, the Healthcare Commission will include contribution to international development in its annual assessment process.

The report goes on to outline ways in which the

UK can contribute to the development of health services in developing countries by:

- assisting developing countries in training more health workers, through an NHS service scholarship scheme;
- committing a significant part of future aid flows for health to help scale-up training and education of health workers.
- establishing a Global Health Partnership Centre – to act as a 'one-stop shop' source of information for individuals and health organisations;

- piloting a Global Health Exchange, based on the principles of an e-Bay type system to provide people, skills, equipment and books;
- new arrangements to support health staff who volunteer to work in developing countries – to ensure they can return to their jobs and pension continuity

The Inter-Ministerial Group on Strengthening Health Capacity in Developing Countries, chaired by Rosie Winterton, will consider the recommendations in Lord Crisp's report. You can read the report on [www.thet.org](http://www.thet.org).

### DFID support for the development of Health Links

**DURING 2006, the Department for International Development (DFID) approved a programme of work that will help support the development of Health Links. Over three years from April 2006 the £500,000 grant – most of which will be spent overseas- will help strengthen existing work and develop new work. Some of the key areas include:**

- Seedcorn grants will be awarded each year to support the development of new Health Links.
- THET will work with governments overseas to strengthen co-ordination of Health Links and other health partnerships and in four pilot countries a national Links Co-ordinator will be appointed within the Ministry of Health
- More evidence will be collected

about the impact of Health Links – both overseas and in the UK. This is likely to include some small scale evaluations and preparation of case studies. This information will be used to strengthen good practice guidelines and help make the case for greater support for Health Links

- The International Links Coordinator role was made full time.



## The Leicester - Gondar Link



**THE University Hospital of Leicester NHS Trust and the University of Leicester have enjoyed a successful Health Link with Gondar Hospital and University in Ethiopia for eleven years.**

Recently, the Link has been very fortunate in being awarded a DFES grant via the England-Africa Partnerships Scheme to support planned activities.

Leicester has offered to support four external PhD studentships to be based in Gondar. The Link is multi-faceted, and new areas of activity are planned, such as a pilot project to establish the scale of mental illness in the Gondar area and to design a mental health service for the area.

To overcome problems caused by restrictions on visas for overseas medical staff travelling to the UK for training, the Link is looking to establish distance learning courses in Ethiopia.

Members of the Leicester team had a successful visit to Gondar in November 2006 where they met up with friends and colleagues to discuss achievements and view progress on new developments such as the cardiology service and the clinical audit programme

Mike Silverman and executive member of the Links said "Link programmes such as ours, bring both rewards and frustrations. The rewards - working with enthusiastic colleagues in Africa, and seeing a real change over time - far exceed the frustrations."

# NHS Management Trainee Assignment Tanzania

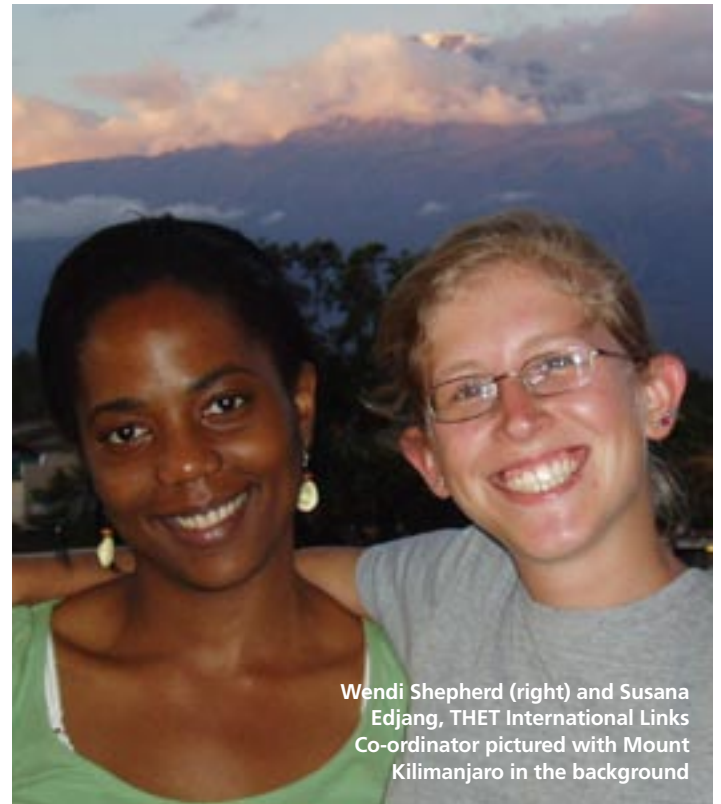
**WENDI Shepherd enrolled on the NHS Management Trainee programme with a background in development work. Wendi's quest for management experience in Africa led her to Brenda Longstaff, manager of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Health Link with Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre in northern Tanzania.**

Wendi set off in September 2006 to support the development of a capital planning programme. However, once at KCMC Wendi experienced culture shock .....

"In the West we are very much concerned about getting everything done straight away: of work being the central point in our lives; of living to work rather than working to live. We talk about work/life balance but rarely get it right. Both refreshingly- and very challengingly when working to a deadline - the attitude I encountered at KCMC was the complete opposite".

Without the trust built up between Northumbria Trust and the Directors of KCMC, it would not have been possible for Wendi to have access to confidential financial records to focus her thesis on the financial challenges of providing a health care service in Tanzania. The thesis will cover the development of a national insurance scheme and various cost sharing initiatives such as a community fund.

Wendi went on to say that



Wendi Shepherd (right) and Susana Edjang, THET International Links Co-ordinator pictured with Mount Kilimanjaro in the background

"experiencing a completely different healthcare system within a different political structure, and one with very few resources, has provided me with some valuable lessons on management and healthcare provision that I will no doubt continually draw upon in my career in the NHS".

Three other NHS Management

Trainees worked during their electives in Kamuzu Central Hospital and Zomba Mental Hospital, Malawi and Princess Marina Hospital and Medical School, Botswana, linked respectively with South Tees NHS Trust, North Yorkshire and York PCT and Addenbrooke's Hospital.

## UK Regional Links Co-ordinator North of England

CAROLINE Potts, a researcher for Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has become the first regional co-ordinator for Health Links reporting to THET. Caroline became interested in Health Links through her involvement with Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre in northern Tanzania where she undertook research into the effectiveness of Health Links from the overseas Link partner's perspective.

Caroline is looking forward to getting to know the Health Links in the north of

England, and establishing a strong support network to encourage best practice and the sharing of information between Health Links. Caroline can be contacted on [caroline.potts@northumbria.nhs.uk](mailto:caroline.potts@northumbria.nhs.uk)

THET is currently looking to recruit volunteers who would be interested in becoming Links Co-ordinators for other regions of the UK. If you are interested please contact Susana Edjang, THET International Links Coordinator, on [susana@thet.org](mailto:susana@thet.org).





Front row: Biku Ghosh (right) with Wodozo (centre) at skills training course for Health Officers in Ethiopia

## Making an impact in Ethiopia

THE Gwent Link with Southern Ethiopia began in 2000 following a request from surgeons in Dilla, to develop a surgical skills training course for Health Officers. Owing to the drastic shortage of trained doctors in the country there was a need to bolster the skills of Health Officers, which are mainly based in rural areas.

A period of intensive consultation began involving a number of colleagues within the UK. The Link successfully fundraised through a staff payroll giving scheme and donations from patients. Local churches were approached and a number of auctions were organised including popular ceilidh and curry evenings.

THET supported the Link for over 5 years with funding from the Big Lottery Fund. This made

it possible to begin work and address the skills gap for health officers, nurses and laboratory assistants in southern Ethiopia.

The Link has carried out training and continuing medical education (CME) workshops for Health Officers for many years. Now, the CME programme has been extended to all the Health Officers working in the Southern Region Nations and Nationalities, and People's Region (SRNNPR) serving a population of 16 million people. The Link has also played an instrumental part in developing a career development structure for all Health Officers in Ethiopia. As well as training Health Officers, the Link has trained lab technicians, nurses and midwives. It has also carried out a leadership skills and 'train the trainers' programme

which was supported by WHO.

Biku Ghosh, a Consultant Surgeon at Neville Hall Hospital in Wales, remains the driving force behind the project. He remembers one of the training courses he delivered, when more than 32 Health Officers enrolled, often travelling three or four days to attend the course. He recognised the face of one of the trainees, Wodozo, whom he had previously trained in surgical skills. Wodozo now worked in Rutajaera Hospital in a remote rural area where there were no doctors and as a Health Officer routinely performed a number of surgical procedures, including caesarean section. Wodozo's courage and dedication was inspirational and a true testimony to the benefits that training and Links can bring.

Enter  
our Links  
Competition

Win up to  
£1,000 for  
your Health  
Link

TELL us how your work has made a difference in 500 to 1,000 words. The write up should include the impact of your Link – this could be on patient care or hospital policy for example. Don't forget to include evidence of this impact, for example by supplying data and giving details of how a problem was identified and addressed. For further information about the competition please visit [www.thet.org](http://www.thet.org) or email David Percy, THET Director for Healthcare Strategy on [david@thet.org](mailto:david@thet.org). Applications should be received by 9th March 2007, please send these to [aisha@thet.org](mailto:aisha@thet.org).

## Launch of new THET website and Links Database

THET has launched a new user friendly website at [www.thet.org](http://www.thet.org). THET is transferring details of active Links onto the web based database system.

● Please contact [aisha@thet.org](mailto:aisha@thet.org) if you have not received a username and password to update your details, and take part in our new members' forum pages.

● If you know of any Link that may not be registered with THET, please encourage them to register - the more Links on the database, the better service THET can provide and the greater the ability **and possibilities** for Links to network.



## Ghana-UK Health Links Meeting

THE Ghana-UK Health Links Meeting will take place on March 21st 2007, from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. The meeting will be hosted by the Royal College of Physicians, London, and aims to explore how Links can contribute and strengthen Ghana's healthcare priorities and to survey how collaboration with Diaspora Groups can strengthen the work of Links. It is expected representation from the Ghana MoH. For more information visit [www.thet.org](http://www.thet.org) or contact Aisha Latif on [aisha@thet.org](mailto:aisha@thet.org).

# Feedback from Harrogate Conference

**ON Friday 26th February 2007, in collaboration with the UK partners of the 7 year old Health Link between Zomba Mental Hospital and North Yorkshire and York PCT, THET organised a Mental Health Links Meeting.**

The successful event took place at the Pavilions of Harrogate. The conference was held in recognition of the fact that mental health is often left out of the agenda or misunderstood in the UK and developing countries. The objectives of the meeting were to strengthen and encourage already existing Mental Health Links and to promote the inclusion of mental health in non-specialist Links.

The meeting was adroitly chaired by Johnny Wardle, Chairman of the PCT who has been always very supportive of the Link. The keynote speech

was given by Professor Rachel Jenkins, Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London. There was a vibrant and enthusiastic representation from members of mental health Links with Uganda, India, Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, Lesotho, Sierra Leone and Malawi. You will be able to read the meeting report on [www.thet.org](http://www.thet.org).

THE Link between the Zomba and Harrogate areas is growing closer. Since 2006 Zomba Central Hospital and Harrogate Acute Trust are in discussions to establish a Link which will help strengthen and widen the partnership between the two regions.

**Alice Kabakwenuzi,  
Ward Manager of the Drug and  
Alcohol Unit,  
Butabika Hospital, Uganda**



## Visa problems and new Home Office rules!

**A clamp down on visas is creating serious problems for health workers coming in to the UK. The Home Office has introduced new regulations to tackle health worker migration from less developed countries.**

Unfortunately this has led to visitors being refused entry to the UK. The Department of Health is engaged in discussions with the Home Office visa section to resolve these issues. Enquiries are being made as to whether future workers coming to the UK for training are eligible for a visa under the Training and Work Experience Scheme (TWES)

Meanwhile Links that want to invite overseas health professionals to the UK for training should continue to apply

for a visitors permit and FCO website instructions to minimise refusals. In addition, a letter needs to be sent by the host organisation to applicants to give to the UK embassy overseas.

The letter should state what training they are coming for, how long the training will last, and who they will stay with. It should also clearly state that the person will not be working while over here and will only receive a small living allowance. It is vital that the applicant states precisely what training they will receive, and how it will benefit their work when they return. A letter of consent from the hospital / clinic where they are currently working is also frequently requested and can assist in the application process.

## Seedcorn funding - successful applicants

**CONGRATULATIONS to our successful Seedcorn funding applicants for 2006. Funds were given to facilitate Links for the following:**

- Addenbrookes Hospital and Princess Marina Hospital in Botswana
- United Bristol Healthcare Trust and Mbarara University Teaching Hospital, Uganda
- Glan Clywd Hospital and Hossana Hospital in Ethiopia
- University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust and St Anne's Hospital and Nkhotakota District Hospital, Malawi
- Leeds Mental Health Teaching Trust and Chainama Hills College in Zambia
- Mid Yorkshire Hospitals Trust and Jan Swasthya Sahyog in India
- Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital Trust and University of Gezira in Sudan

**LOOK out for details of the 2007 application process for seedcorn funding on [www.thet.org](http://www.thet.org) from March 2007 onwards.**