**Scholar Development Training Record example 2**

**Describe what it means to be a Commonwealth Scholar, and why you decided to embark on your course of study.**

I am…a young Optometrist and researcher from Ghana. It is an honour studying the MPH in Public Health at the University of Edinburgh through the Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarship. To be a Scholar is a rare privilege and blessing, and thus, would enhance my personal, academic, and professional development.

Public health aims at improving the health of communities through education, research, policymaking, etc. Notably, public health for eye care in Ghana (Africa) is in its developmental phase. There is a gap in translating quality research into useful clinical management of eye diseases/disorders and providing support for public eye-health systems and management. I believe that this MPH in Public Health programme would adequately equip me with the needed knowledge, skills and training in public health for eye care research to facilitate better eye health, its management and research outputs in Ghana (Africa). It is my long-term goal of becoming a faculty member and/or an international expert in Public health for eye care, contributing significantly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (especially Goal 3 – Good Health and Well Being), and help shape science policy and innovation for the future development of science in Africa and internationally.

**What is your anticipated impact/what do you hope to achieve as a result of your Commonwealth Scholarship?**

My vision is to see that no one is needlessly blind in my country and around the world. I envisage a time where blindness or visual impairment would not negatively impact the quality of life of affected individuals. This change will ignite the passion in others to serve as agents of change in their respective fields, and thus, make them proactive in the processes of development. I would be proud of my untiring role as a change-maker in the area of eye health, actively participating in clinical and research activities aimed at developing appropriate interventions for serious eye diseases/disorders (such as diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma) and improving timely access to and utilization of eyecare services globally.

**What does development mean to you?**

The significance of development in any nation or in the lives of individuals cannot be underestimated. Development provides individuals, organizations, and nations with benefits aimed at achieving targeted goals, involves the processes of continual growth and offers the potential for a positive change (socioeconomically, physically, and environmentally). I believe that various aspects of development, including human/professional development, form the basis for consistent growth and innovations in any organization and/or country. Human development, especially in the area of health, contributes significantly to expanding the real opportunities people have to receive high-quality medical care, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and to avoid untimely death by diseases.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global challenges – which are relevant to your studies?**

As a health worker, I will contribute effectively to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 3 (Good Health and Well Being) and 4 (Quality Education). Through shared knowledge and collaborative engagements with other professionals/scholars globally, my contribution will help shape science policy and innovation for the future development of science in Africa and internationally.

**The practice of development – which changes do you wish to see, and how will you make it happen?**

The goal to become a change-maker requires determination and focus. As a change-maker, I have the privilege of initiating actions aimed at development. I hope to see both institutional and local impacts in the area of eyecare in Ghana. Regarding institutional impact, I hope to train other eyecare professionals in relevant public health practices and approaches in dealing with eye-health issues through well-organized workshops and seminars, ensuring patient education and counseling through institutionalized patient health counseling sessions, and providing desired, high-quality eyecare to patients/clients in a timely and judicious manner through continuous professional development engagements with other eyecare professionals. Local impact would include the assessment of the most prevalent eye diseases/disorders among community folks and developing an appropriate intervention to curb this menace through community eye screenings and research activities.

**Biases and assumptions – which ones do you face?**

The concept of unconscious bias is inevitable, and it has mainly affected the decisions I make in life (through personal experiences, societal norms and values, and training from my family). Bringing about developmental change(s) requires a deep sense of reasoning, analyzing situations and outcomes, and evaluating the effects of various interventions. It therefore suggests that taking an instant decision, without going through the rigorous processes of examining the effect/impact of that decision, may negatively affect the proposed developmental change that I wish to have experienced. Following my graduation from Optometry school in Ghana, I worked in a private eye clinic (name withheld). The largely unfair remuneration I received from the clinic’s management, owing to my recent graduation and presumably limited optometric skills, was met with great disdain. However, I resolved never to employ the idea of supremacy to maltreat people I would work with in the future. It is therefore imperative that I examine myself and become conscious of my decisions and actions, so as to serve as an effective change-maker in my community, organization, and/or country.

**Investigating development issues in your community**

One of the major developmental challenges Ghana faces is the inefficient healthcare system and access to healthcare services (linked to SDG 3). Though government has taken steps to address this challenge, various interventions have proven futile. One such area of health service delivery is the uptake or utilization of eyecare services in the country. The prevalence of eye diseases is still on the increase, despite various interventions. To address this challenge, my eyecare institution has initiated mandatory clinical outreach services as a core aspect of the institution’s responsibility to citizens. Outreach services are targeted at promoting efficient utilization of eyecare services and reducing the prevalence of avoidable blindness in the country. It is my goal to engage CEOs/Directors of all eye clinics/hospitals in and around local communities to employ clinical outreaches as mandatory services to be rendered by their staff to all manner of persons in nearby communities.

**Working with partners and other stakeholders**

In Ghana, almost all the development actors play key roles in the development of the health sector, particularly eye health. The Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Health, formulates and implements policies on health. These policies (such as the National Health Insurance Scheme [NHIS]) offer the less privileged in society the opportunity to access quality eyecare from all parts of the country. Private actors, through their private health schemes have also demonstrated their commitment to addressing the eyecare needs of the populace. Various private health facilities have actively contributed to the decline in ocular diseases in the country through active participation in dialogues and organized health events. The roles of NGOs, CSOs, and international bodies such as the USAID and Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health, just to mention a few, have been very influential in the delivery of better eye-health services in Ghana. These organizations usually provide financial aids and create public awareness on good health practices. Partnerships offer the avenue for development and attract human (professional) and infrastructural development, facilitate technological advancement, provide financial commitment (aid), set clear goals and priorities, and offers the platform for exchange of knowledge and ideas. The synergies from people/organizations/nations will facilitate the process of development, and I hope to leverage on these partnerships available in my country to enhance public eye health.