JAMES JIMMY JAJUA: A TRIBUTE.

The community of Waterloo, Sierra Leone and members of the Waterloo Partnership in the United Kingdom were shocked to learn of the death of James (Jimmy) Jajua, Waterloo Community Health Officer, on 12th October, 2014.

Jimmy was born in 1964 at Segbwema, Eastern District Province. He was educated at Wesley Secondary School, Segbwema, where he obtained the GCE ‘O’ level in in 1981, and went to train as a State Enrolled Community Health Nurse at the Nixon Memorial Methodist Hospital, Segbwema, from 1982 -1985. Jimmy worked there for the next 3 years, during which he took an active part in a Lassa Fever Research Project. In 1989 he enrolled at the Paramedical School, Bo, where he qualified in 1993 as a Community Health Officer. From 1996 to 2001 he was Government Attaché to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) stationed at the Waterloo Internally Displaced People Camp, where his duties included epidemic prevention through health education and immunisation, as well as assisting at surgical operations and midwifery.

In 2001 Jimmy began his employment with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation as a Community Health Officer at Leicester & Gloucester, followed by Tombo from 2003 to 2009. In July 2009 he moved to his final posting at Waterloo as Community Health Officer and Disease Surveillance Officer. The duties of a CHO are very broad, and to enable him to give his best to his work James also completed several certified courses over the years, including Tropical Community Medicine and Health; Management of Rape Survivors; Peer Counselling of HIV/AIDS; and Strategic Planning for ADRA. Jimmy was keen to expand his knowledge and in 2012 successfully applied to do a course in International Public Health at Leeds University in England, but was thwarted by UK Border Control.

I first visited Waterloo in 2011 as a Trustee of the Waterloo Partnership, which has been supporting the community in Sierra Leone since 2005. As a retired surgeon, I was interested in the work at the Community Health Centre, which I visited and met Jimmy several times. Although the Centre is constantly busy, he always found time to talk about the wide range of work being done by his staff, including Mrs Princess Bangura who runs the Maternity Unit, and to show me round the compound. To me Jimmy came across as very calm and ‘laid back’, almost self- effacing, but this hid an active, intelligent mind. He was proud of the work being done there and, with the support of the DMO, had plans to expand the facilities. This was apparent when I last visited him in April this year. For example, there is now an operating theatre for treating common complaints and new facilities for HIV/AIDS counselling, which has freed up space in the Health Centre for other functions. In the wider community, James was greatly respected as a doctor who cared for the well- being of the people of Waterloo.

Having come through the horrors of the civil war, it is ironic that he should have succumbed to the present ghastly Ebola catastrophe. His last email to me summed up his feelings:

“Thank you for your concern over the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone and Waterloo in particular. May I take this opportunity to express the profound gratitude and appreciation to the Waterloo Partnership for the provision of food items to the people under quarantine. However in my own personal opinion the present situation with those infected and affected with the EVD has very little or no difference with the aftermath of the past civil war. It is serious I must confess.”

James was playing a vital role in the Ebola epidemic as Surveillance Officer and as a doctor caring for the sick at the Health Centre and out in the community. He was highly regarded in his community and at the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and will be badly missed by all.

We send our sincere condolences to James’ wife Fatima and their four children, and to the unborn child that Fatima is carrying. They can be very proud of him.

David Lloyd, October 2014.

Chairman, The Waterloo Partnership.