



Chelsey Rhodes <chelseyrhodes008@gmail.com>

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## Fwd: Safety and Wellness Concerns

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To: Chelsey Rhodes <chelseyrhodes008@gmail.com>

Fri, Jul 5, 2019 at 2:40 PM

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From: **David Enriquez** <davidenriquez@ewb.ca>

Date: Fri, Apr 5, 2019 at 11:53 AM

Subject: Safety and Wellness Concerns

To: Nazarene Njeru <naznjeru@ewb.ca>, Herbert Kisara <herbertkisara@ewb.ca>, Lydia Opiyo <lydiaopiyo@ewb.ca>, Heather Yundt <heatheryundt@ewb.ca>, Sterre Mkatini <sterremkatini@ewb.ca>

Dear Fellows,

Some of you have reached out to EWB to let us know your concerns. We are aware of the posts on social media by an individual making claims against Engineers Without Borders (EWB) Canada. We agree they are concerning and want to reassure you we are taking them seriously, I would like to provide some context about the allegations and the actions being taken by EWB. This is important as you embark on a Fellowship with EWB.

The individual is a former EWB fellow who has recently been posting on social media about her personal experience with EWB in Malawi between 2011 and 2012, alleging she experienced verbal harassment. An investigation was completed at that time which concluded that there was no evidence of employment harassment, and both EWB and the individual came to a legal settlement in 2013, the contents of which is confidential.

Yet, as you can imagine nothing is more important to engage in intentionally and transparently than the safety and safeguarding of our EWB Fellows, staff and volunteers. That is why, prompted by the allegations made on social media, the EWB Board of Directors has decided to launch:

1. An independent legal review into the way EWB responded and investigated the allegations between 2011 and now,
2. A full independent audit of EWB's current safeguarding culture, policies and processes. The aim of this audit is to detect any flaws in our culture, processes and policies by examining how we are currently responding to current situations, and how we are safeguarding all those who work and volunteer for EWB.

There is also a Scope of Work that the Board of Directors mandated to a third party, this work started at the beginning of Feb 2019 and was designed to:

1. Conduct a fair, equitable and transparent inquiry into EWB's conduct, responses, and practices in relation to the complaint;
2. Assess the implementation of the recommendations of the 2013 report, and review subsequent relations between EWB and the Complainant;

3. Review and evaluate the adequacy of EWB's policy framework and personnel practices in Canada and Africa.
4. Recommend policy, procedural and other changes that reflect best practices for Canadian and international development charities.

#### **Who is leading the audit?**

- As all of you know, EWB is an international organization with a unique, international operations model. As such, it was important for EWB to engage someone who has knowledge of and leadership experience in the international, volunteer sending space.
- Derek Evans, who the EWB Board of Directors engaged to lead this process, has extensive background in both senior management and governance in the NGO sector, nationally and internationally. His primary background is in education and human rights. He served as Deputy Secretary General of Amnesty International and CEO of Cuso International for six years. His understanding of volunteer sending and volunteer safety through this role at Cuso International is one of the reasons he was selected to undertake this process.
- Derek was approached by Cameron, based on his experience and credibility. Cameron had previously worked with Derek in his capacity as Board Chair of Cuso International for six years, during Derek's tenure there as CEO.
- It's important that everyone know that Derek has been retained as an independent consultant, has no connection to or involvement in EWB operations and is completely independent of the organization. His report will be provided to the entire EWB Board of Directors upon completion.
- Derek will also be working with Colleen Dunlop, a partner at Emond Harnden, a labour and employment law firm based in Ottawa. She regularly advises with respect to policy development and strategic labour relations advice, and regularly provides customized training seminars on human rights, violence in the workplace, harassment, and attendance management. Colleen was engaged directly by Derek, and she has no previous relationship with EWB.
- This review will be well-served not only by Derek and Colleen's independent stature, but by their relevant experience working for organizations with similar missions, goals and structures.

We expect the investigation to be completed by May 2019 and are committed to being transparent about the results.

In addition to this, it's important for you to know that EWB has intentionally built structures for the safety of fellows, that we've been developing since sending our first fellow. To get a better idea of some of these structures here is a [link to the EWB Fellows Policy Portal](#), containing policies, procedures and guidelines. We are still updating the Emergency Response Plans for each country so that they are ready before you depart. There will be training during pre-departure and in-country training (ICT) on the application of these policies, so fellows know how to apply these in practice. Similar trainings are conducted regularly with the Fellowships Team staff, so they also have an understanding of the application to properly support fellows.

There will be a public statement from EWB providing more information to the community in the next 2 weeks. We sincerely apologize for any concern this may have caused and we want to assure you that we are taking these accusations seriously. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me

know. Also, for those of you in EWB chapters across Canada, feel free to communicate this information to your fellow chapter members.

I look forward to meeting all of you in person in the next few weeks.

Thanks and see you all soon,

David

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**David Enriquez**

Director, Fellowships (Canada and sub-Saharan Africa)

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