

**EMERGING
VOICES2018**

ev4gh.net

EV4GH
Newsletter

The EV4GH Network

by Dorcus Kiwanuka, Chair EV4GH

The editorial team of this brand new newsletter asked me to write a short piece on the EV4GH network and how I see its future, for the inaugural edition. As the new chair of the network, I could hardly refuse. So here I go:

Since the start of the EV4GH venture, in 2010, the global landscape for health systems has changed significantly with the increased prominence of health systems research and a steadily rising number of local, regional and global players in Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR). This increased prominence sends a clear message on the importance of health policy and systems research in global health and how the field can contribute to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) around the world. As I'm writing these words, the UHC Forum in Tokyo is about to begin, with HPSR playing a key role.

The EV4GH network is one of the global players within the Health Policy and Systems Research arena. The network started as an initiative by the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp in 2010. At that time the aim was to empower health systems researchers from the global south by providing them with skills training to facilitate their participation in, and boost their voices at the First Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Montreux, Switzerland, in line with the "Switching the Poles" idea. After the initial success of this venture, subsequent selection of participants in EV ventures linked to Global Symposia on Health Systems Research (in respectively Beijing, Cape Town and Vancouver) and to

some extent aligned with selection criteria for the Global Symposia on Health Systems Research, but never fully overlapped – preserving the EV "DNA" always remained a key concern. The ICASA EV venture in Cape Town (2013) was a bit of an outlier, being less focused on health policy & systems research, but it's clear that the intersection between (the fight against) HIV and health systems has only become more important since then. To date, five editions of 'emerging voices' ventures have taken place, with over 200 alumni from 53 countries. Since 2015, the network is also a Thematic Working Group (TWG) of Health Systems Global (HSG) reechoing the importance of young researchers in the advancement of the health systems strengthening agenda and more explicitly achieving the goal of UHC. We also have a lively Google group, even if some of us spam you a bit too much. The network has an elected governance committee that draws representation from EV alumni from the five WHO regions of Africa, the Americas, South East Asia, Eastern Mediterranean and European regions with a secretariat based at the Institute of Public Health, Bangalore.

Although the network has maintained its focus on young researchers aspiring for local change and global impact, the network strives to include (also) other young professionals passionate about strengthening health systems within their local and national context through advocacy, brokering, journalism and advancing health equity and social justice. To this end, for the upcoming Liverpool EV venture (June-October 2018), EV4GH has established another track to be able to capture interest

and participation of these groups of people. The network will also involve the EV partner institutes for this venture, clearly with the Liverpool partner this time playing a significant role.

Moving forward, EV4GH would like to increase membership and participation from so far underrepresented regions, for example, the Spanish speaking Americas, participants from the former Soviet Union and those from conflict-affected states and fragile states, in Francophone West-Africa or elsewhere. Promote engagement and collaboration of the young researchers, post-symposia, with policy makers/decision makers in their local contexts so that the skills gained during the training can enable the EVs to become (even more effective) local changemakers within health systems.

The EV4GH is very uniquely placed to contribute to the growth of health systems and policy research with its continued ability to attract young researchers and professionals from different parts of the world, especially low and middle-income countries. Please join our next venture in Liverpool and be part of a network of young, energized and exciting young professionals involved in making a difference to the health system.

PS: but do start in time with your visa applications!



Governance Meeting, October 2017: Summary and Key Decisions

by Pragati Hebbar, Secretary EV4GH

The weather in Belgium held up splendidly as the EV Governance Board convened its annual governance meet this October (12th – 14th October, 2017) at ITM, Antwerp. The Emerging Voices for Global Health group currently comprises of 232 EVs (and alumni), from 53 countries. Former and newly elected members of the EV4GH board met to discuss in detail the following issues:

Based on a survey & discussions with key informants, Sara Ardila and Raoul Bermejo presented lessons from past ventures, and presented ideas for future editions. Board members brainstormed on several issues, and worked in smaller groups on the budget, terms of reference for the Liverpool edition of the venture, and explored using collaborative platforms such as [Collectivity](#). After all the heavy lifting, the EV Governance Board members were joined by the wider group of EV alumni and friends-of-EVs, many of whom were in Antwerp to attend the [ECTMIH](#) conference.

The three-day meeting led to several decisions regarding the overall structure of the Emerging Voices program, and also towards the Liverpool venture. These are listed below:

Governance issues and decisions

- Structure of [EV governance board](#):
 - It was decided to have a chair whose function would include networking, and overall strategizing for the program
 - The board will (also) be represented by two co-chairs – one focusing on finance and fundraising. The other on technical content and to serve as treasurer (thereby eliminating the designation of treasurer)
 - Chair EV4GH: Dorcus Kiwanuka (whose function would be networking, strategizing for the term of 2017 – 19)
 - Co-chairs EV4GH: Prashant Nugehalli Srinivas focusing on networking and technical content, as well as being an 'Emergent dad') & Vladimir Gordeev (focusing on fundraising and finances)
 - Other new board members include Sara Ardila, Faraz Khalid, and Virgil Lokossou (who are the regional representatives for the Americas, Eastern Mediterranean and the Francophone Africa regions respectively)
 - Laura Dean (based in the EV4GH2018 partner institute) was appointed as coordinator for EV4GH 2018, Liverpool
 - The work of outgoing members Elena Vargas and Arsène Kpangon was acknowledged
 - Former board member Asmat Malik, who passed away a few months ago, was commemorated
 - Two liaison members also remain part of the Board, for the time being: Kristof Decoster (liaison with ITM & 'spammer-in-chief' of EV googlegroup) & Kopano Mabaso (liaison with HS Global)
- Develop a vision/ mission for EV and prepare it in a consultative manner and present the final version in Liverpool.
- A thorough discussion also took place on the 3rd day of the meeting (with EV friends & some more EV alumni present), on the future of the network. Among others, emphasis was put on 'maintaining/going back to the DNA' of EVs (challenging the mainstream, including via innovative formats); the "business model" of EVs (aiming for a balance between funding concerns & preserving "EV identity"); how to involve partner institutes more; the alumni network; ...

EV4GH2018, Liverpool

- Task forces have been conceptualized. Governance members have taken the lead for each
- [Call for applications](#) for EV4GH 2018 has been launched. This edition features two tracks: one to attract health system implementers, journalists, and activists; the other aimed at health system actors.
- EVs are being encouraged to propose joint sessions for HSR & EV4GH 2018. A dedicated TWG session for the EV TWG is also being planned.



Governance board members and friends of EVs enjoy an unusually warm October in Antwerp

EMERGING VOICES TASK FORCES (by Sara Ardila Gómez)

One of the key outcomes of the [Governance Board Meeting](#) was the establishment of Task Forces – to support network strengthening and development activities of EV4GH. The task forces, led by members of the board will work with teams comprising of EVs who have volunteered their time on activities which range from the next EV venture, to long-term objectives of the Network. Over 40 EV alumni have volunteered their time on these task forces. The list of task forces and contact details of leads are given below. Membership to the EV task forces are open to EVs and EV Alumni.

- Selection of EVs 2018: Jin (xujin@bjmu.edu.cn) and Virgil (vlokossou@wahooas.org)
- Distant Learning for EV 2018 venture: Prashanth (prashanthns@iphindia.org)
- Face to Face Training and Pre-Conference for EV 2018 venture: Faraz (farazkhalidpk@yahoo.com)
- Fund raising: Vladimir (vsgordeev@outlook.com)
- Communication, Social Media and Alumni Network: Sara (saraardi@gmail.com) and Radhika (radhika.arora@gmail.com)

Emerging Voice Residencies EV

This year, the Emerging Voices program issued a call for *The Emerging Voices for global health residency programme for researchers* for current and alumni EV. Four Emerging Voices were selected for residencies at the Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp, the first two arrived in Antwerp in 2017 – Sara Ardila Gómez (Argentina) and Sana Contractor (India). They write here about their experiences

EV in Residence – Sana Contractor

As an EV resident, I have been at the Institute of Tropical Medicine's Health Policy Unit since October, processing data and ideas from my work around Maternal and Reproductive Health in India. My central project here has been to write up a publishable academic paper using data from a study on indigenous women's experiences with maternal health services in Eastern India. The study was commissioned by an advocacy network – the National Alliance for Maternal Health as a Human Right (NAMHHR) – with the purpose of influencing government to adapt its programming to the needs of this community. However, I am using my time at ITM to convert this into an academic paper that adds to the thinking on how we conceive of and respond to inequities in health. While the preoccupation in the maternal and reproductive health field has been with increasing coverage to "leave no one behind", I argue that inappropriate policy solutions can make marginalized groups even more vulnerable and therefore there is a need to rethink the solutions themselves. In addition to this I have also been writing more informal pieces like blogs for the International Health Policies blog and Health Systems Global. Interactions with researchers and faculty at the Health Policy Unit and also others at the Institute have been enriching and have helped me learn about new issues around governance and health systems. Perhaps one of the highlights of my stay here was the opportunity to speak at the WHO Executive Board Special Session in Geneva on 22nd November, presenting comments on the draft 13th General Program of Work from a civil society perspective.

I have worked professionally in the development sector for about a decade now, with a strong rootedness in the local context and struggles, as well as training in formal research. In this time, the research that I have done has had very practical advocacy uses, but I have also struggled with converting the knowledge into something more "academic". Being at ITM has allowed me to process not just data, but also new ideas around this work. It has provided exposure to theoretical thinking and formulation, and helped me bring more nuance into how I articulate issues. Additionally, some time away from my hectic managerial responsibilities at office has given me the space to process my work into new outputs. Finally, the residency has been a way for me to sustain my relationship with the EV program and ITM, which are important sources of solidarity for me in these troubling times.



Sana learns to make a snowman during the EV residency at ITM

EV in Residence – Sara Ardila Gómez

In July this year, I left my home in Argentina to spend three months with the Health Policy Unit at ITM. My proposal was to work on a project to strengthen collaboration within the EV cohort, particularly researchers. I thought the development of research networks would offer a good platform for collaboration.

One of the first tasks I undertook was to identify who was working on what – a task which wasn't that easy, but the Alumni Survey developed in August 2017 made it easier. Using information gathered from the alumni survey, I began my work by grouping EVs by the areas they worked on – by different topics (for example, nutrition and health, communicable diseases, etc.). This thematic grouping of EVs enabled us to encourage EVs to submit proposals for organized sessions at the next HSR 2018. One of the main challenges towards enhancing successful, sustained collaborations is that it requires one or more people to take the lead to channel, and organize the energy and enthusiasm of a group of researchers.

Also, as part of my EV residency, I started what Kristof refers to as my "mental health experiment". Because mental health is my field of work, I started the development of a mental health hub, as a way to explore potential pathways and challenges towards the development of such a network. Luckily, I was able to connect with people willing to collaborate, and in this case, to work on mental health research from within the EV Network, as well as link with other networks via the EVs. We are, at this point, developing a project on knowledge translation in mental health. Besides the "mental health ones", we can count on the support and collaboration with other EVs who specialize in knowledge translation. We look forward to bringing you updates on the project in the forthcoming newsletters!

And finally, all work and no play makes for a dull day! My time in Antwerp was wonderful. I had the opportunity to learn many things on the technical front, but also meet people from around the work (and world), and strengthen bonds with all the amazing people I met. It was also a time to challenge myself, and one of my favourite memories is of running the 10K with fellow EVs – Prashanth NS (in great shape these days) and Jean-Paul Dossou – with plenty of encouragement from seasoned runner Wim. For me that race was an example of what we EVs are: I was about to quit at the first KM (a very hot day, in October, yes!) but Jean-Paul wouldn't let me, running at my side all the time. Support, clearly, can help us to reach unthinkable goals. Thanks to EV for this great opportunity!!!



The whole 10K, with Jean-Paul, Prashanth, Wim and Sara

EV Milestone Activities

ECTMIH from the perspective of emerging, Southern researchers: Angelica Ullauri and Eleanor Whyte (EV 2016)

In October we attended the [10th European Conference in Tropical Medicine and International Health](#) in Antwerp. The event was much anticipated by both of us as we looked forward to meeting many of our EV 2016 friends, and connecting with EV alumni from other cohorts. The experience proved to be very enriching, not in the least because it allowed us to strengthen our connections with the EV network, and proved that the benefits of belonging to the EVs extend well beyond the face-to-face programme. The conference also turned out to be an opportunity to engage in stimulating conversations about our role as EVs from the *Global South* in challenging old paradigms of global health and raising our voices to bring about change.

As a conference focusing largely on the European context, ECTMIH 2017 was rife with discourse that assumed and reinforced a particular geopolitical distribution of power. The opening plenary focused on the increase in cases of mosquito-borne 'tropical' diseases in Europe, which, for many of us, served as a reminder that much of the world's interest in controlling diseases in the tropics is motivated (at least in part) by fears that such diseases will not stay in 'the tropics'. The opaque and covert nature of this discourse was further highlighted by the unveiling of the new ECTMIH logo, which replaces a logo depicting



At ECTMIH

snakes in a palm tree and a large, powerful ship rushing to the rescue. Many of us were surprised that the original logo lasted this long. The fact that it had, was a reminder that while the words and images that shape our discourse might change, the power dynamics and prejudices that underlie them remain the same.



Belgian fries are a must

Nonetheless, the experience as a whole was overwhelmingly positive, and this is largely due to the EV network. Firstly, in both our cases, our participation at the conference was made possible through ITM – home base of the EV programme (via DGD funding). As early-career researchers from South, it was highly unlikely that we would have been able to attend the conference without this support. Secondly, thanks to the EV network, the number, and prominence of, 'Southern' voices at the conference was such that this 'North-vs-South' discourse (which in any other circumstances

might have remained invisible) was illuminated, explored and drawn out – both in informal discussions, and in programme sessions. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, being a part of the EV network meant having a dynamic and passionate group of (often more experienced) peers to chat to, and debrief with, at the end of every day. This support structure gave us the confidence to question these discourses, and to speak out about pernicious trends and ideas that reinforce power imbalances and artificial divisions in global health. If the conference taught us anything, it is the power that a network of dynamic and engaged Southern researchers with a desire to support and promote each other, and a passion for equity and justice in all things holds.

Canadian Conference on Global Health: Sameera Hussain (EV2014) and Sarah Brown (Canadian Society for International Health)

From October 29-31, nearly 600 people from 25 countries, from all ages and walks of life – practitioners, researchers, educators, students, policy makers and community mobilizers – gathered in Ottawa, Canada for three days of unforgettable learning, exchanging, reflecting and networking at the [Canadian Society for International Health's](#) annual Canadian Conference on Global Health.

Following a much anticipated introduction by Paul Farmer (which was interesting, but was more of the usual conference format), EV 2014 Shakira Choonara brought energy into an opening plenary with an introduction to the theme of the CCGH: *Leaving no one behind: Reflection for action in a changing world*. Her introduction was delivered with a simple blindfold experiment, with which she demonstrated the difficulties faced by the visually impaired in various interactions with the health system.

In addition to Shakira's keynote, EV participation was widespread at the conference, with Deepika Saluja (2016), Bhaskar Purohit (2014), Faraz Khalid (2016), Alemayehu Hailu (2016) attending the conference.

Finally, Sameera Hussain (EV2014) started a position as Health System Impact Fellow with the [Canadian Society for International Health](#), to launch a [community of practice around SDGs for health](#). This extends the work of her PhD around the global health discourse leading up to the SDGs and focuses on how to operationalize lofty ideals to impact on the ground.

For more information on CSIH and the conference, please visit: <http://www.csih.org/en/events/canadian-conference-global-health/ccgh-2017> or view the blogs in the Huffington Post written by participants listed below: *CCGH blogs in Huffington Post*

· [Leaving no one behind? Reflections for action in a changing world](#)

- [Time for Dialogue in the Dark in Health Care](#)
- [There Are Barriers To The World We All Want](#)
- [Cholera In Haiti Is The UN's Dreadful Legacy](#)
- [Community Engagement in the SDG Era: Why?](#)