



EMERGING VOICES FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

Quarterly Newsletter

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2021: We Made It!

This has been a year of intense work and changes in our EV network. We had a renewal of the governance board, a transition of the EV secretariat, and an external evaluation. Besides, we were selected for a five-year term as a Thematic Working Group of the Health Systems Global.

Despite the uncertainties due to the pandemic, we managed to hold a successful Face-to-Face venture in Dubai with the 2020 EV cohort. We are now on course with the preparations for EV 2022 in Colombia.

I ought to mention all the voices raised by our EV alumni and TWG

members challenging the status quo of global health and the inequities that, as someone said: we are not surprised but do not get used (and will never be) to them.

I believe in the power of networks. All that we have achieved has been possible due to the power of our connections as EVs and with others who see us as a needed player in the global health field.

Within this newsletter, you will get some insights of all the achievements we need to be proud of as EVs after a challenging year for us all.



Sara Ardila, EV4GH Chair

A warm welcome to the new generation of EVs, who, as I already told, definitely have the EV vibe.

Shaping Constructive Disruptors: A Chat with an EV 2020

During the EV 2020 venture in Dubai, **Topistar Karani**, a communications assistant at APHRC caught up with one of the EVs, **Ghislaine Ouedraogo-Ametchie**, a social scientist from Burkina Faso. Her work centers around health system strengthening, particularly on maternal and newborn health as well as malaria. Through her research and project implementation work, she also addresses the power dynamics in development and ushers in conversations about decolonizing health. As a social scientist and an implementer, she helps generate the data used by policy makers to inform policy, works with international and national organizations to utilize data to design projects that will improve health outcomes for all. In this Q & A she tells us more about her work within the evidence to action continuum. Read on...

How did you get to know about Emerging Voices for Global Health?

I learned about the Emerging Voices for Global Health program through my network and was really excited that a program that only focused on researchers and practitioners from developing countries existed.

What prompted you to join the EV 2020 cohort?

I applied because of the focus of the program on health system strengthening, and because I espoused their belief that emerging countries need to address systemic issues in order to improve health outcomes for their populations. Although my work already achieved that, I wanted to gain the skills and aptitudes to do this more efficiently, more inclusively and more intentionally.

What so far has been the main highlight of the conference for you?

The main highlight of the conference for me has been the networking and the ability to meet like-minded peers doing pioneering work in their countries. The level of care facilitators showed us, the amount of energy and knowledge sharing they poured into this conference and the program is deeply humbling and validating. It created a safe space for us to trust and respect one another, which is fertile ground for collaboration, thought partnership and friendship. The skill-building sessions were extremely enlightening, useful and relevant. The Big Talks around issues of corruption, socio-economic factors, climate change and a range of other issues heightened our critical thinking skills and brought life to evidence in action.



Ghislaine listening in during the Dubai Venture

What are some, or at least one skill set you think the EV4GH should embark upon?

In addition to building our knowledge translation, communication, critical thinking and advocacy skills and awakening the activist within us, this program could crystalize all this through health system interactions in the host country. A site visit to the Ministry of Health, to a local NGO engaged in constructive disruption that shapes and improves the health systems. So many opportunities to reflect in the country on what action looks like, especially when it comes from a committed, passionate and skilled person who is knowledgeable about the health system.

What do you hope for as the main take away after this conference?

The main takeaway of this conference is that we are individually powerful, and with the new skills, knowledge and collaborations we have acquired through the EV program, we can become positive

agents of change for our communities, our countries and the global health community as a whole. We are constructive disruptors, and we are unstoppable!

What is your hope for the future of the EV4GH?

My hope is that this program will continue to build and transform young researchers' and practitioners' agencies by giving them the know-how, the confidence and the vision to become constructive disruptors and agents of change in their countries. My hope is that the alumni's involvement and commitment to the program as facilitators continues to be the driving force behind the program's uniqueness, success and richness.

Are there any additional outcomes you would have liked to see during this conference?

I wish the program was longer, held in an emerging country, and more intentional about keeping the EV spirit alive following ventures. One thing for sure, I am an alumnus of the program now, and besides giving back by becoming a facilitator for the upcoming venture in Bogota, Colombia, I will be contributing to the development of further collaborative alumni platforms by geography, topic and profession.

What advice do you have for fellow and upcoming cohorts?

My advice for upcoming cohorts is to do it, even if you are afraid. Jump in. Push yourself. Follow your interests. Don't hold back, because your potential is limitless, and this program gives you wings. It enables you to shine where you thought you had no learning capabilities, it enables you to reach across boundaries and enact change. It builds community, validates your voice and enables you to use it for good. Apply!

"My hope is that this program will continue to build and transform young researchers' and practitioners' agencies by giving them the know-how, the confidence and the vision to become constructive disruptors and agents of change in their countries."

What it Takes to Facilitate an EV Venture: A Chat with an EV 2020 Dubai Facilitator

Kranthi Vysyaraju, a facilitator in the EV 2020 venture is an Education Officer/ Program Coordinator. She has been instrumental in putting together capacity building initiatives for the past one and a half years at the Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru. Her experience spanning 10+ years has been in life sciences research and clinical research. In this Q & A she talks to **Topistar Karani** about the 2020 venture and what she enjoyed most about facilitating in some of the sessions.

What is your relationship with Emerging Voices for Global Health?

I came to EV4GH 2020 to replace another facilitator (Dr. Tanya Seshadri) from IPH. This is my first encounter with the EV4GH venture. I co-facilitated the introduction/ icebreaker, skill-building session on elevator pitch, and a privilege walk activity to talk about intersectionality and helped facilitate a panel discussion on Climate Resilience and Sustainable Health Systems.

What prompted you to be a facilitator for EV 2020?

When one of the facilitators was unable to travel for the Face to Face session, there was a call in IPH for anyone else who could substitute. I was very interested in understanding more about EV4GH as I know IPH has been deeply involved in many of the ventures and also as the secretariat for a few years. However, I learned about the venture only superficially from monthly staff updates. When the call was announced, I spoke to others who have been part of EV before – and was enthused by the idea of getting hands-on experience of this venture. I have recently moved into the Education/ Capacity Building area in public health and I hope to grow in this field. Such an experience was an opportunity for me to understand coordination of the program, people skills, pedagogy, and evaluation of and importantly uncover for me multiple key people with experience in this area.

Fortunately, IPH also thought I could facilitate and encouraged my interest.

What was the main highlight of the conference for you?

I must admit that the operational aspects of putting such a venture together were quite challenging. Still, the secretariat and governance and others involved worked very hard to pull it off and be as accommodating and considerate to everyone as possible. I think the camaraderie and kindness that everyone showed to one another in uncountable ways was my takeaway from this conference – at the end of the day; we are all similar in many ways: we all got impacted by the pandemic, we all were worried about getting back home due to travel unpredictability thanks to Omicron, and yet we are not equal in the sense some of us are more privileged than others, and we were able to appreciate that right there amid the pandemic and EV4GH2020.

What are some, or at least one skill set you think the EVs should embark upon?

The elevator pitch – speaking to different stakeholders/ audience and capturing their attention in a limited time and in the age of mobile phones and constant interruptions!

What do you hope was the main takeaway from the conference?

I hope that everyone has made at least one friend who is different from them – whether it is where they are from, what they do, disciplines, etc and have opened their mind to a different world than the one they came from.



Kranthi making her presentation during the Dubai Venture

What is your hope for the future of the EV4GH?

The intent of the program seems noble – I hope the tribe grows and many more benefit from this program.

What advice do you have for EVs?

Pass the favour on and positively influence others around you with your learnings and give back to the EV society by participating in future ventures.

"I think the camaraderie and kindness that everyone showed to one another in uncountable ways was my takeaway from this conference."

A Rare Face-to-Face EV Venture in Dubai

By Goran Zangana

In November 2021, Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) gathered in Dubai's Mohammed Bin Rashid School of [Government](#) (MBRSG) for the overdue 2020 face-to-face training programme.

While experiencing the culture, traditions and modernity of Dubai and UAE, the EV2020 cohort engaged in learning, debates and critiques of the health systems and policy themes discussed in [HSR2020](#).

Watching the difficult, yet skilful moves of a Belly dancer (an Egyptian folk dance) in the 'Sahara' of Dubai was not without relevance to the intricate art of [participatory governance](#) in the health system which often can go wrong. The same was true for practising an eye-catching and engaging '[elevator pitch](#)' with a policymaker or awaiting your turn to express a strong opinion in Dubai's 30 degrees Celsius heated '[fishbowl](#)'.

Talking to a taxi driver from India or a shopkeeper from the Philippines about accessing healthcare through private health insurance, was complementary to a [session](#) on engaging economic forces in global health, and exploring barriers to achieving universal health highlighted powerfully through a '[power walk](#)' exercise.

A Syrian performer in the desert playing with fire was the closest you can get to [studying corruption](#) in health systems and starting to think about engaging in activism in that minefield area particularly in the authoritarian and conflict-ridden contexts of the Middle East.



Goran making his presentation during the Dubai Venture

Experiencing first-hand the innovations at the [International Humanitarian City](#) reaffirmed the ideas presented in the Conflict-Affected Health Systems session that so-called '[fragility](#)' can be pregnant with innovation and bottom-up solutions if one listens and is prepared to be wrong.

"Gathering in person in Dubai was empowering and full of triumph in beating a pandemic's restriction on our freedom to travel."

Nowhere better than Dubai, EVs could see the destructive potential of urbanisation but also tools (such as a [smart government](#)) to protect our planet while we were busy reaching the impossible presented at [Expo 2020](#). Issues that were debated in a session on planetary health and [environmental forces](#), but also over dinner in Iraqi, Iranian and Lebanese restaurants full of references to the beauty and vitality of Mesopotamia and the [Green \(Fertile\) Crescent](#) to our existence as a species.

While the Burj Khalifa inspired EVs that the sky is their limit, they were also reminded by activists that there were so many thick and [unjust](#) glass ceilings that still needed breaking particularly when it comes to [gender](#) issues and decolonising global health. Gathering in person in Dubai was empowering and full of triumph in beating pandemic's restrictions on our freedom to travel. Finally, EVs harnessed the power of technology in reaching virtually a wider audience through world-class MBRSG's media [efforts](#) and a wrap-up [webinar](#) that brought home the contribution of EVs to enhancing health systems.

Pictorials from the EV 2020 Venture in Dubai



Colombia Beckons! Introducing the 2022 Venture

By Cesar Vargas

Beyond Montreux, Beijing, Cape Town (twice), Vancouver, Liverpool, and – finally - Dubai, it is time for [Emerging Voices for Global Health](#) (EV4GH) for the first time since 2010, in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. [Bogotá](#), Colombia, will host the [Seventh Global Symposium on Health Systems Research](#) between 31 October and 4 November 2022 ([#HSR2022](#)). Like most of the previous EV4GH editions, this eighth version will be linked to the Health Systems Global (HSG) symposium. Then, hopefully, the new 'Emerging Voices' cohort [#EV2022](#) (just succeeding the '[pandemic cohort](#)') will meet physically there, in Colombia, from the last week of October (around 22-24) to 5th November 2022, after the e-coaching and distance learning phase of the program.



Cesar during the EV 2020 in Dubai

[The call is already out!](#) We have also started working closely with some new partner institutions in Colombia to ensure early that this venture will become a globally relevant, and enjoyable experience for all. To promote our network among the promising and emerging health policy & systems researchers, decision-makers, and other health system actors, we are making an appearance during the [pre-conferences](#) organized by the HSG's Latin America and Caribbean Regional Network. One of these was the '[Andean Pre-conference](#)', held in a hybrid format from Medellín, Colombia, on November 10, 2021. The next, the 'Caribbean Pre-conference', is coming up on 18 January, 2022. The purpose is to bring together the

global health community of the region to engage with the rest of the world's global health community and enrich the debate.

Amidst the theme of the Symposium, "*Health Systems Performance in the Political Agenda: Sharing lessons for current and global challenges*", and the various subthemes of [#HSR2022](#), [#EV2022](#) will mark a unique opportunity to reflect on crucial issues for the region. For instance, some of the highest levels of income inequality and one of the world's large migration flows takes place there, not to mention the need to reinterpret the meaning of the decolonization movement for us. Not so transcendental, [#EV2022](#) also will be the opportunity to engage with local actors, maybe to the rhythm of salsa, samba, ranchera, Cuban Trova, tango, or some cumbias. In EV4GH always there is a chance for fun and cultural immersion.

Come, and let us establish a chorus of diverse, exponential, resonant, provocative, and disruptive voices to speak the truth to power. Join us in the loneliness of Latin America and the Caribbean that our Colombian literature Nobel, Gabriel García Márquez, for 'One Hundred Years of Solitude', denounced 39 years ago. Let me paraphrase a segment of his [acceptance speech](#) to the Swedish Academy of Letters, saying that:

"I dare to think that it is this outsized reality that has deserved the attention of the [global health community]. A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude."

Los esperamos con los brazos abiertos.

"Come, and let us establish a chorus of diverse, exponential, resonant, provocative, and disruptive voices to speak the truth to power."

An EV Alumnus: A Chat with Ahmad Khalid (EV 2018)

Ahmad Firas Khalid, an EV alumnus, talked to **Topistar Karani** about his time as an EV, the relationships and network that he created as a result and shared some of his most memorable moments about being an EV. Read on.

Tell us a little about yourself

I am an EV 2018 alumnus born in Amman Jordan, who grew up in the United Arab Emirates, lived in more than 10 countries around the world, and immigrated to Canada in 2009. Having been exposed to so many cultures, it allowed me to bring a global perspective to my academic and professional career.



EV #HSR2018 in Liverpool

How did your time as an EV shape your career today?

The Emerging Voices program gave me access to a great network of diverse scholars from across the world. The face-to-face training and virtual training components exposed me to novel ideas particularly around knowledge translation and how to effectively communicate my research to a wider audience.

How would you describe the relationships and networks you created during and after your fellowship?

I feel like I am now part of a network of colleagues who became friends over a short period of time. We all stay in touch via a WhatsApp group where we share exciting career opportunities, new publications any of us are working on, or reminisce about the fun times we had during the program.



Khalid and fellow EV's at Liverpool

What are some of the memorable experiences you had during your fellowship?

I was part of the cohort that went to Liverpool and the community site visits were a great highlight. We got to meet innovative decision-makers committed to making a difference in the lives of children by strengthening collaboration among community health leaders.



EV #HSR2018 in Liverpool

What is your hope for the future of the EV4GH?

I hope that the EV4GH program continues to attract committed young and promising health policy and systems researchers dedicated to disseminating knowledge about how to build resilient health systems.

"The face-to-face training and virtual training components exposed me to novel ideas particularly around knowledge translation and how to effectively communicate my research to a wider audience."

Strategic Reflections at the 2021 “hybrid” Governance Meeting: The Way Forward After the 10th EV4GH Anniversary

By Charles Ssemugabo, Tatiana Paduraru, Kristof Decoster and Nandini Sarkar

The Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) held a hybrid governance meeting on November 18-19, 2021 at Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government with some members zooming in. In addition to the governance board members, the meeting was also attended (virtually) by Prof. Wim Van Damme (founding father of EV4GH) and Marta Vicente-Crespo (Programme Manager at African Population and Health Research Center, the new EV secretariat). This was the usual annual governance meeting but with a hybrid twist. The two days served as a perfect opportunity for follow-up to the commissioned 10th Anniversary [evaluation](#) of EV4GH and the two facilitated strategic reflection meetings that took place early October 2021.

Major issues discussed were:

Discussions kicked off with recognizing the formal end of the secretariat transition, with the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in Nairobi, Kenya from now on formally hosting the secretariat. They are picking up the baton from the Institute of Public Health (IPH) Bangalore in India, after a 6-month transition period which started in July 2021.

Following the 10-year evaluation, the governance team held two strategic reflection meetings (October 5th and 7th 2021) facilitated by Vicky and Emma from Capacity Development International UK (which had conducted the commissioned evaluation). Based on the evaluation recommendations, the governance team had agreed on strategic priorities in the short and long term. External and internal objectives for the EV venture and network were initially already developed during these strategic reflection meetings in October. During the hybrid governance meeting in Dubai, the governance team agreed to develop a 1-year strategic direction (till Bogota 2022) detailing priorities for the next year, including “quick wins”. For external objectives, ensuring diverse cohorts and facilitators for future EV4GH ventures and delivering a high quality venture (#EV2022) were among the priorities agreed upon. Among the listed internal objectives, effective governance (including better differentiation of operational from governance/strategic roles), increasing funding, more effective communication, use of online learning platforms and nurturing a bigger volunteer base were among the priorities agreed upon for the coming year. The governance team also agreed that medium and longer term objectives will be tracked and evaluated after Bogota 2022.

Relatedly, the governance team discussed task forces as a key strategy to increase the volunteer base. Participants also discussed how these task forces could be streamlined, including via clearer timelines, deliverables, and ownership. Several task forces have already been created, others are in the works, including on Bogota 2022, EV alumni, communication, mentorship, and fundraising. Soon, the secretariat will send out forms requesting you to sign up to different task forces. The strength of EV4GH relies on the common actions across the planet, our joint forces are contributing to the decolonization of global health and allow marginalized or neglected voices to be heard. We hope many of you will contribute!

Other discussions focused on monitoring and evaluation with a view on EV4GH as a thematic working group for Health Systems Global, as a network of young, promising and emerging researchers and other change agents in its own right, and as a DGD funding beneficiary. Widening the focus of EV4GH from just the health policy and systems realm to also including other topical global health issues like climate change and planetary health was discussed with implications on potentially changing the mission statement. One idea would be to add to our ‘equity’ focus, in addition to ‘planetary health’ and ‘Decolonizing Global Health’ as key lenses to look at HPSR and global health. In case this were to happen, the governance team would reach out to the EV alumni first.

Finally, with Bogota 2022 already in our sight, the governance team also reviewed progress with the preparation for the EV2022 distance and face-to-face venture including release and dissemination of the call, application platforms, review process, local hosts, and fundraising. On that note we appeal to all of you to disseminate the call within your networks and circles but also to consider participating in the review of applications, distance coaching and face-to-face phases of the venture (see the above mentioned task forces).

More strategically, EV4GH hopes to work towards achieving the external and internal objectives with annual or biannual progress reviews. This will be achieved through differentiation of operational from strategic roles and widening the volunteer base through well-organized task forces. So let’s reiterate: we need all of YOU to make this initiative and network flourish in the next decade! *(for some reason, a famous quote by John Kennedy comes to mind)*

Piloting a Light Mentorship Scheme for the New EV Cohort

By Charles Ssemugabo, Kristof Decoster and Nandini Sarkar

On the wrap-up day in Dubai, a 'light mentorship scheme' was discussed with the EVs from the new EV 2020 cohort, to see whether they'd be interested. That seemed to be the case, so the decision was taken to pilot the scheme for the new cohort (or at least the ones among them interested in being mentored).

This light mentorship scheme is to have the following features:

- For 6 months (probably from end of January (or mid-February) till end of July (or mid-August 2022))
- EVs from the new cohort will be matched with an EV alumnus (or other expert from our network). Given that many EV alumni are now further in their career, we hope many will volunteer to mentor.
- Focus will be on one deliverable/output.
- Ideally, this deliverable should be linked to some extent to the umbrella theme, "Reimagining Health Systems for better health and social justice". As this is a fairly general theme, that shouldn't be too difficult. But if you wish so, you can also go beyond this umbrella theme (e.g.: re planetary health,...).
- Possible platforms to aim for: the EV website, other blog platforms (IHP, HSG, Think Global Health and perhaps the Conversation). As for peer reviewed publications, BMJ Global Health & Plos Global Public Health will be recommended. Other options: organized or (support with) individual abstracts at HSR 2022.
- For EVs interested in advocacy campaigns/activism/policy brokerage : mentorship on a local drive within local settings or on social media platforms like twitter, Facebook or Instagram, or career advice from experienced EV alumni in these areas.

Soon, when the new Secretariat reaches out to the EV alumni for joining various taskforces (probably early January), one of these taskforces will also target potential mentors (among EV alumni). The mentorship task force will also come up with some further guidelines to structure the mentorship a bit (e.g. at least three (virtual) meetings, mentee needs to be proactive and possibly a light 'contract').

If this turns out as a good experience for both mentees and mentors, we intend to build on this for the Colombia venture in 2022.



Nandini and Charles giving their closing remarks at the venture

Announcing the New EV4GH Secretariat: African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC)

EV4GH is pleased to announce and welcome the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in Kenya as the new Secretariat. APHRC takes over from the Institute of Public Health, Bangalore (IPH) who were invaluable in their work and contributed immensely to where we are today.

APHRC is Africa's premier research institution and think tank, generating evidence to drive policy action to improve the health and wellbeing of African people. We are glad to have them on board as they help drive EV4GH's agenda of training young, promising emerging health professionals to become influential voices and changemakers.

Editorial Team

Gloria Chemutai, Topistar Karani, Francis Cheruiyot and Marta Vicente-Crespo