

The EV4GH NEWSLETTER

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Welcome Note

by Topistar Karani, Communication Assistant, EV Secretariat



Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) is an innovative multi-partner blended training program that includes face-to-face and virtual training components. It is a program for young, promising, and emerging health policy, systems researchers, decision-makers, and other health system professionals. These individuals have an interest in becoming influential global health voices and/or local change makers, particularly in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).

Over the years, the EV4GH network has relied on its alumni, partners, and friends of the network to keep its activities going. Between 2010 - 2022, the program has held seven EV4GH ventures and now has over 280 Emerging Voices (EV) alumni that represent over 60 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and the Americas.

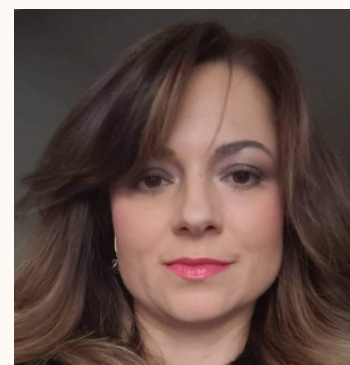
The eighth and most recent edition was held between October 20 to November 4, 2023, and took place in Colombia, where 38 EVs took part in the training. During the Colombia venture, the EVs participated in a two-week face-to-face training in Medellin at the University de Antioquia and a weeklong global health and systems research symposium in Bogota at the Agora Convention Center.

In this issue, we focus on the Colombia 2022 venture by sharing some experiences of EVs and facilitators during their stay in Colombia. We also share a glimpse of some important activities in 2023, such as the elections and restructuring of the governance board. Enjoy the read!

A Step into the Future - Upcoming Elections and Restructuring the Governance Board

by Tatiana Paduraru, Acting Chair - EV4GH

In the recent 2022 edition of EV4GH in Medellin and Bogota, Colombia, the program marked 12 years as a network and also served to begin discussions on what is next. Indeed, the 10-year anniversary [evaluation](#) of the initiative and network and the recent venture highlight the need for EV4GH to think deliberately and strategically on how the network can function more effectively and sustain an engaged network responsive to the emerging global health needs.



The EV4GH network comprises a strong base of EV alumni, a Governance Board (GB) to steer EV activities, and a Secretariat to oversee and support operational activities. Partner institutes and friends of EV also play their role as volunteers in the program. Taskforces based on alumni volunteer participation exist to serve the different needs of a functioning network.

The current EV4GH GB structure, in place since the end of 2015, has sought to ensure global representation based on the World Health Organization (WHO) regions. The Governance Board plays a strategic role but on a volunteer basis. The EV4GH Secretariat is the venture and network's technical arm and aims to ensure division of roles between strategic and operational components. Overall, the structure is designed to serve the needs of the venture(s) and network but more than 10 years after the start of the network, and with a growing EV base, there has emerged a need for change to keep up with the times and ensure sustainability! Hence the need for GB reforms.

Governance Board reforms that aim to enable better coordination, functionality, and coherence of actions are a vital step towards EV4GH 2.0. Online. In Bogota, during the EV Business Meeting, discussions with EVs – alumni and new ones – raised some important questions for the network: how will we function in the future? What is the structure of EV4GH? Does the network continue to operate with a base of volunteers? What is the role of the secretariat? Do we retain the secretariat, or not? Do we actually require a secretariat?

Accountability also proved to be a vital issue, to be applied to all actors involved: governance board members, the secretariat, Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) and other partner institutes, and the task forces. Imbalances in contribution have been relatively high, creating internal tensions and leading to a heavier burden on some members and inadequate participation by others.

Early 2023, the EV4GH Governance Board will organize elections for the selection of new board members – kick-starting a new biannual mandate. For now, two reform proposals have been presented – one focuses more on the extension of the governance board team by inviting more partners, and the other one takes the route of strengthening the task forces. The expansion of the GB to better run the program by distributing responsibilities across the different regions came up. It has also been suggested to address the imbalance in contributions via clear terms of reference and limiting the African region to one representative (like all other regions) and instead proposing an international seat and an Emerged Voice (EV alumni). The latest is to be invited in case of necessity and according to the mandate of expertise matching the concrete situation (for which the expertise is required).

Time to tackle all that with your help. So stay tuned, aiming for a joint successful ride for the next ten years!

EV Facilitator Kranthi Reflects on the Colombia Venture

by Kranthi Vysyaraju, EV 2022 Facilitator



I remember the enthusiasm upon receiving the Health Systems Global (HSG) scholarship to participate in the Health Systems Global Research Symposium 2022 (HSR 2022). The excitement was accompanied by a natural nervousness to leave my children for three weeks to participate in the symposium and the EV4GH 2022.

My interest and enthusiasm for EV4GH were fueled after attending the EV4GH2020 edition held in Dubai in 2021. I work on capacity building at the Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru (IPH) – so given IPH's historical links with the EV program as the immediate previous secretariat and an institute with multiple EV alumni, the interest I had for the venture was organic.

I led the Emerging Voices Thematic Working Group organized session. The session was titled, 'A game of power and privilege in global health: can you walk the walk and talk the talk?' It was the product of late-night discussions, debates, and collective creativity, which was well-received for the discussion it stirred among participants. It gave participants a chance to reflect on power, privilege, and knowledge equity in the global HPSR scenario.

A "gift exchange" game broke the ice quickly among the EV 2022 cohort, and we spent the venture immersed in health systems as well as exploring Medellín's culture, history, dance, and music together. The cohort demonstrated maturity and camaraderie by looking out for one another, listening to conflicting opinions respectfully (and even writing about it), voicing their discomforts, providing collective critical feedback about the program - the future feels promising with these emerging global health leaders.

The highlight of EV2022 was the community site visits from the local guides where we got a rich perspective on the historical and social contexts and their translation into developing Colombia's health systems, policies, education, infrastructure, etc.

At HSR 2022, EVs were like a cult that stood for each other across cohorts - the camaraderie was palpable at the conference. They attended and supported one another during presentations, provided critical inputs in the EV thematic working group business meeting, and proudly cheered Daniela Ochaíta (EV2022) as she participated in the closing plenary as a panelist.

The Colombian experience was magical, and I am grateful for the relationships built with the people I met, with whom I look forward to collaborating and working with.

My EV Experience: A chat with Daniela Ochaíta

During the EV 2022 venture in Colombia, **Topistar Karani**, Communications Assistant at APHRC caught up with one of the EVs, **Daniela Ochaíta**, a Social Scientist from Guatemala. Her work focuses on intercultural public health, primary health care provision, strengthening health systems, and health equity with inter-and trans-disciplinary approaches. In this Q & A, she tells us more about her work and experience during the venture.

Tell us a little about yourself

I have a background in Anthropology and Development Studies and my research interests are focused on intercultural public health, primary healthcare provision, strengthening health systems, and health equity with inter-and trans-disciplinary approaches. I am currently working in an interdisciplinary team at the Center of Health Studies from Del Valle University of Guatemala where I conduct research and implementation projects with Maya indigenous communities. I am passionate about community-engagement methodologies and I also endeavour to promote more inclusive, pertinent, and efficient primary healthcare models through participatory research and multi-sectorial processes.

What prompted you to join the EV 2022 cohort?

One of my colleagues at the Center of Health Studies got to hear about the program from her professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) in the UK, and she in turn recommended it to me. I thought that it was a wonderful opportunity to engage deeper in the global health topic while meeting and learning from a cohort of interesting colleagues and facilitators from around the globe. Also, I had a lot of interest in strengthening health systems using collective intelligence and how

to generate efficient advocate processes to transform data into health policy agendas.

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

The EV4GH program allowed me to understand that many of the problems of access to health that I found in the Central American context are also relevant in contexts of the Global South. Exchanges between people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America made me see that the great challenges of the modern world can only be faced through collective intelligence and inclusion. Furthermore, many of the major inequities that affect population health are influenced by phenomena beyond health, climate change, energy transition, racism, gender, and economic and political divides that are interwoven in the real world. The personalized support of our expert facilitators from various disciplines, the practical experience of visits to territories, exchanging experiences and ideas with my EV colleagues (and friends), and the socialization of science communication tools such as policy briefs, infographics, visual and audio material, were key processes for understanding the importance of transcending traditional science. Our times pose great challenges, but we also have great tools ideas and, interconnectedness to engage in collaborative processes to face these challenges and transformed them into opportunities.



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

The program should present cases of current global health problems and deepen different approaches and methodologies to address them. Also, allow students to have exchanges on the research projects and methodologies they have carried out, beyond those that will be presented at the HSR Symposium or those that they carried out for the EV program.

What do you think are some of the lessons learnt going forward?

The EV experience was a competitive leadership and recognition program for impactful and change-making researchers and system actors. Being part of the 2022 cohort allowed me to expand my perspective from public health to global health. We were about 40 young researchers from about 29 countries, with different backgrounds and interests. All of them were aligned with health approaches to improve the living conditions of the population.

Are there any additional information/material you would have liked to see during this training?

Real-life cases of challenging health problems where we work in multidisciplinary teams (with colleagues from the EV program) to try to generate proposals for solutions to these problems based on scientific research projects, professional applications or knowledge translation for advocacy.

What is your hope for the future of EV4GH?

The program is an intense collective effort by organizers and alumni. I understand that there are managing funds challenges and that the organizational work is largely volunteer. I hope that in the following events, these challenges can be mitigated through the expansion of the network and the prestige that the program has globally.

I also hope that more researchers and global health professionals can access the program and receive the learnings from this experience. Finally, maybe someday I could be part of the organizing team to give back the learnings and lessons that it has left me and to support the continuity of new generations of EVs.

What advice do you have for the upcoming cohorts?

The EV program is a unique opportunity for young researchers to participate in multiple activities to address health challenges. It is a wonderful experience to present current research and work with a group of interdisciplinary experts and colleagues from around the world. It allows you to receive feedback and improve communication and leadership skills in order to prepare young researchers for the next step in their careers. Moreover, it is a global platform that will put you in touch with the best research topics and some useful frameworks. I recommend all curious and passionate researchers and professionals who want to improve and broaden their horizons in global health to apply.



EV2022 in Colombia: On keeping Emerging Voices Innovative, Disruptive and Relevant

by Cesar Vargas, EV 2022 Facilitator & governance member 'on the ground'



Months have passed since the successful conclusion of the 8th edition of the EV4GH program. The Face-to-Face (F2F) program took place in the resilient city of Medellin, during the first 10 days of a packed program that could (and perhaps should?) be 'decompressed' in future editions.

Reflections focused on global health issues of local relevance that triggered in turn broader reflections on violence and health, migration, health, and intersectionality, all linked to immersive community visits. A good opportunity to go through the concept of glocality. I dare say that this ingredient of the 2022 F2F program should be preserved for future editions.

After Medellin, we flew to cosmopolitan Bogota (the first time EVs took a domestic flight collectively #EVplane). The agenda for EV4GH in Bogota started with the [Thematic Working Group](#) network capacity strengthening session, a satellite session. In the absence of Deepika Saluja (alumni task force), the session was led by Charles Ssemugabo, Tatiana Paduraru (EV co-chairs), and former ITM liaison Kristof Decoster. Focusing on the network and organisational aspects, it was an opportunity to share lessons on what it means to run the EV4GH network to strengthen #HPSR capacities, shedding light on assets and challenges. (Thanks Kristof for your contribution to EV4GH for more than one decade: Together with others, you have moved a mountain!). Later, EVs took part in a skill-building session co-hosted with UNICEF on disability and inclusive health.

EV4GH also introduced the 'power walk' during the EV organised session at HSR 2022. The first walk, 'A game of power and privilege in global health: can you walk the walk and talk the talk?', moderated by Kranthi Vysyaraju (IPH Bangalore), allowed us to identify, expose, criticize and address power imbalances and inequalities in knowledge production and use in #HPSR. And EV alumna Nasreen Jessani moderated "one of the most powerful plenary openings in recent memory!" with EV2022 and EV alumni participating in a walk on stage that raised important questions about the power and equity issues facing Colombian health workers, given ongoing violence, gender inequality, and equity issues.

Throughout the training, the new EVs showed off their boosted communication skills by delivering engaging presentations and displaying catchy posters. They also enthusiastically supported their peers (as well as EV alumni from previous cohorts) during #HSR2022. Then the closing plenary still had to come. In the best tradition of Emerging Voices, and after her fellow EVs had assigned her as 'the spokesperson' of the new cohort for the Closing Plenary, EV2022 Daniela Da Costa, a social scientist from Guatemala, "emerged" with a 'powerful and moving speech', challenging the audience: "What are you going to do to improve equity in primary care?" Yes, these EV4GH folks were really taking over!

After the 'social night', Goran Zangana, now a member of the new Board of Health Systems Global, moderated the hybrid EV 'Business Meeting' on Friday morning. Retiring Chair, Sara Ardila, whom we thank for her legacy and relentless commitment to EV4GH, and Co-chair Charles Ssemugabo, presented the Governance Board reform proposals, and got feedback from EVs from different cohorts. To be continued!

May this reverberating energy maintain the good momentum achieved by EV4GH during this edition, to successfully face the winds of governance reform, elections and preparations for Nagasaki 2024 that lie ahead. The network has reached such a level of maturity that the new generations are claiming active participation in the design of the program, while also aiming "to give back" in some way to the communities where the program is held.

Colombia Venture Pictorial

