

The EV4GH NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



EV Governance team meeting in Antwerp

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Welcome Note

by Topistar Karani, Communication Assistant, EV Secretariat

Welcome to the 8th edition of the Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) newsletter. A lot has transpired in the past four months, as the new secretariat continues to navigate through busy schedules in preparation for the Colombia venture.

In this issue, we introduce the new (or in some cases revived) task forces and their operationalization; The Governance team lead by Sara Ardila (EV Chair) shed some light on the money dimension of EV, and how they aim for more transparency in this respect: Sara Ardila also shares her perspective on how to best improve participation and open the door (more) for new ideas; and the Governance Co-Chair, Charles Ssemugabo, writes about the thematic working groups and the long and winding road to the seventh symposium. Furthermore, we feature an article by Ikenna Ebiri on his EV thematic working group experience and journey so far.

In this period, we have unveiled the new EV logo, thanks to – once again – Angeli Rawat (EV 2014). We thank her. Thank you all for supporting the EV4GH network activities over the years, and even more so in the last two years that have been full of uncertainty due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. While preparing for EV2022 in Colombia, keep safe and enjoy the read!

Emotions, Connections and Perhaps Existential Questions? The Network Beyond the Venture

by Sara Ardila-Gómez, Emerging Voices Governance Board Chair



During the past month, members of our Google group exchanged views on topical issues. The war in Ukraine, and the high fees of the upcoming Global Symposium in Colombia sparked quite some opinions and reactions among EV alumni. Both topics are close to my heart.

My parents lived and studied in the former Soviet Union, and my childhood is full of memories of those times. My pet, when I was a little girl, had a Russian name. My son has a small wooden box, where I am supposed to keep his first tooth that falls out, following a Russian tradition. When my father passed away last year, and I could not attend his funeral, my dream was to go one more time to Moscow, as the closure of my mourning.

Despite living in Argentina for almost 15 years now, I am Colombian, and to have the EV venture in my Country is another one of my dreams. I believe that having the drive and energy of Emerging Voices in Colombia, will be, somehow, a contribution to the defense of the peace agreement there. I want every EV to go to Colombia this year.

Anyway, after these personal confessions, let us go back to the main agenda of this article. EV Governance Board Members are constantly wondering and reflecting on how to increase participation among the network members, and at the end of the day, how to build a network beyond the venture. From the past month's exchanges, I have realized that many of us are there, present but (mostly) silent and that what we probably need to "show up" is to connect with an emotion that "moves" us. In the cases of the past month: fear, anger, frustration. As I reflect on this, I think about how we can move on and build on those emotions that moved us, how our network can help us to channel those and other kinds of emotions, and how the governance board can facilitate that.

The current structure of the governance board exists since... seven years now. I believe that almost half of the current EV members joined the network after it was conceived and established. At the beginning, the idea was to have the main decisions made by alumni representatives, with the representative structure based on WHO regions. It is time to evaluate whether the governance board is reaching its goals, or if, seven years after, we need to make some changes. Some questions that I have, and that I need your help with, are: How can the governance board help our network, if at all? Is the governance board doing its job right? What do EV members expect from the governance board? What is your emotion towards the governance board? Shall we change the governance board structure? Why? How? And do you still feel part of Emerging Voices and want to have a voice in it? Why?

Emerging Voices for Global Health Reconfirmed as a Thematic Working Group of Health Systems Global

by Charles Ssemugabo, Emerging Voices Governance Board Co-Chair

In the Winter of 2021, Health Systems Global (HSG) launched a call for Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), for renewal of existing and new entrants. Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) responded to the call. EV4GH prides itself as an innovative multi-partner blended training program for young and emerging health policy and systems researchers (HPSR), decision makers and other health system professionals. The program uses virtual and face-to-face training to equip participants with skills to become influential global health voices and/or local change-makers. The HSG call came just after the [10th Anniversary](#) of EV4GH.



Building on among others a [recent EV4GH evaluation](#), we received positive feedback from HSG after their review of our (TWG) proposal for the coming 5 years. This shows that HSG appreciates the role of EV4GH in the development of HPSR research around the world especially in the Global South and for relative 'youngsters'. Via the EV venture (organized every two years),

EV4GH continues to focus on introducing young health systems 'change agents' into the broader HSG community. The network (and EV TWG) also tries to welcome other young HPSR'ers, via among others the EV Google group and webinars. EV4GH will remain an affiliate of HSG for the next 5 years and promote the development of HPSR against a backdrop of many global health challenges such as climate change, decolonization of global health etc.

As we gear up for the 7th Global Health Systems Research [symposium](#) in Bogota, Colombia 2022 (HSR2022), EV4GH is building on this momentum. To this end, we have a couple of activities that contribute to the objectives of HSG in the pipeline. In June 2022, we will be hosting a capacity building webinar for the broader EV TWG. During the HSR2022 symposium, we will have a TWG-organised session, a business lunch meeting as well as a second capacity building session (webinar). And obviously, as is our tradition, we will have the new EV2022 cohort undertake the distance coaching and face-to-face training (which typically ends with a wrap-up event) prior to the symposium. We hope you can contribute to the organisation of these events whenever possible.

Money, an Important Dimension of (Emerging Voices) Reality

Aiming for transparency: report from the governance board

by Sara Ardila-Gómez, Kristof Decoster, Nandini D P Sarkar, Charles Ssemugabo, Tatiana Paduraru

In the last week of April, the Governance Board held its annual meeting in Antwerp, Belgium, in hybrid mode, with some governance board members joining us physically and others virtually. The two-day meeting covered several different topics. Among the most important issues: a proposal to restructure the Governance Board (which will be presented to the entire network in the coming months), and the preparation for the EV2022 venture in Colombia, including the hot topic of funding.

Just when we said goodbye to each other in Antwerp, we received news that the Gates Foundation (GF) decided to fund the equivalent of 14 EV scholarships for Colombia 2022. That will cover almost half of EV scholarships in the pessimistic scenario (30 new EVs), and 33% in the optimistic one (45). That news was received with enthusiasm by most of the board members, given our financial reality (that the majority of EVs probably are not aware of). However it also led to some discussions amongst us on the origins of EV funding, and the importance of transparency about that, both towards the EV network and the EV candidates who will be selected for the 2022 venture. This short report attempts to bring some transparency on EV funding over the years, and shed some light on the internal discussions and decisions we take as a Governance Board.

It is interesting, for some of us, that the issue of (funding) transparency just popped up when GF became a stakeholder. For more than 10 years, this has not raised any questions or been a concern even for those who have received an EV scholarship, including members of the Governance Board. We always made clear who were the “partner institutions” and main donors of each venture, but funding sources in detail have not been clear for all, and this information has been largely part of financial reports for donors and other stakeholders. Even on the EV website, for example, there is no clear historical overview of funders over the years.

We know the role and ‘footprint’ of GF in global health, but we also know that GF money is spread over many of the agencies or institutions that have funded us in the past. This time things will be much clearer, and in this sense, different.

We realize that there is need to be more transparent with the EV network about our financial situation both for past years, current times and in the future. Have you ever wondered how much an EV scholarship costs, where that money comes from, and how it has been obtained? Guess not :)

The EV initiative and network has two main “costs”: the EV venture organized every two years, and the EV secretariat (which also provides support in between venture years) In terms of “visible costs”, the Secretariat (now based at the African Population and Health Research Center - APHRC) is currently funded entirely by the Belgian Development Cooperation (DGD), and its operational cost per year is 45,000 Euro. In the past, when the EV secretariat was based at the Institute of Public Health (IPH) Bangalore (2015-2021), there was no secured sources of funding (DGD or any other) which

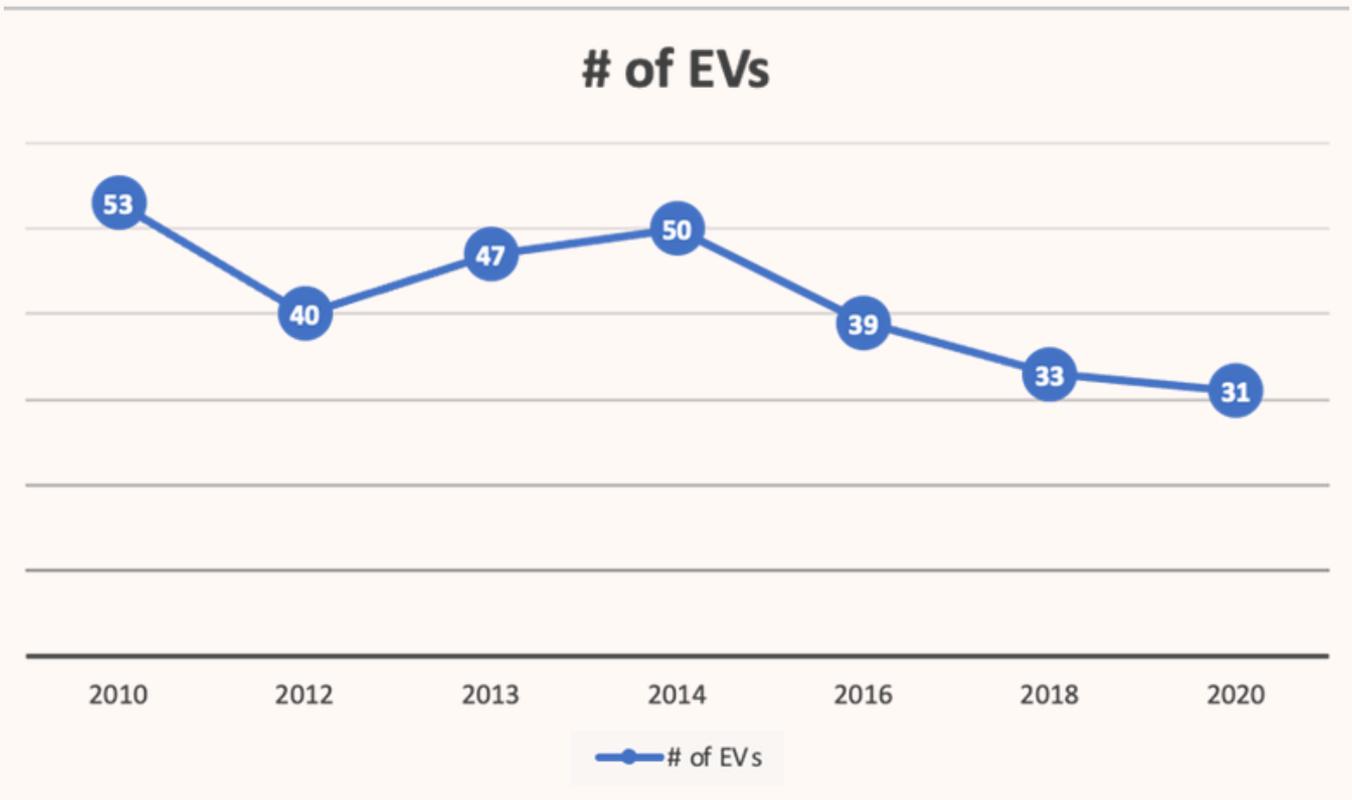
meant we had to be rather pro-active in trying to find sufficient funding for the secretariat to function.

We managed to find some funding from Institute of Public Health (IPH), but it was on a shoestring budget - the 10-year evaluation done last year also pointed to some under costing. We realize that IPH, when hosting the secretariat, did a lot with very little money. Now, at long last, we have a properly funded Secretariat for the coming years. So that’s progress - a Secretariat is anything but a luxury for a programme & network like EV.

About the EV venture, the current estimate of an EV scholarship is around 7,000 USD. For some of us this is more than 10 times the money we receive per year for research (at least, if you’re lucky enough to receive some research funding). The scholarship covers all associated costs in the distance learning stage and face-to-face event. It also includes the cost of facilitation. Funding sources have changed over the years, and in the last 2-3 ventures, we have seen how our funding options (in terms of how many EVs we can fund) have been decreased and/or constrained for different reasons (Figure 1).

Reasons for this include, among others, more targeted and strict funding criteria from some of our funders; fundraising restrictions after we became a thematic working group (TWG) of Health Systems Global (HSG) (even though there were some positive funding outcomes about the TWG role), and the fact there are growing numbers of other “leadership” programs in global health that also seek for funding in, an increasingly difficult financial environment. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, the war in Ukraine impacted global and local funding priorities, with cuts sometimes more than 30%.

Figure 1. Emerging Voices funded per Venture, 2010-2020 (source: EV4GH webpage).



As for our relationship with HSG, as a TWG, it is clear there are both pros and cons. In past ventures (like Vancouver, Liverpool...) we could benefit from some ‘overlapping scholarships’ (if applicants did well in both our EV selection and the HSG selection). In practice, this meant we secured some scholarships for the symposium, and some of the totals costs were covered. It was then up to us to figure out how to fund the remainder (i.e. extra hotel days and per diems for the actual EV event). We hope this will be possible again this year as well as in the future, although we understand that also on HSG’s side, funding is more limited than in the past.

This discussion (on ‘overlapping scholarships’) has never been straightforward though, as HSG does not want to differentiate between different TWGs - which is understandable. But it is fair to say that EV, besides being a TWG, is still very much a fellowship programme too, certainly in the year of a venture. Thus, we do believe we remain a “special” TWG, one that also benefits the broader HSG community in the medium term, especially if we manage to fund more new EVs each venture (annex symposium).

Additionally, with HSG conducting its own fundraising for the symposium, as a TWG we need to double check with them before approaching any potential funder. As you can imagine, this does not offer that much room for maneuvering. Nevertheless, as a TWG, and just like all other TWGs, EV receives 10,000 USD on a bi-annual basis. This money is used in part to cover the cost of the annual governance meetings, as well as to pay some HSG membership fees. It is worth mentioning that a strategic decision we took last year, when we applied for a new term as a TWG, was to do our best to integrate and collaborate with HSG as a TWG. At the end of this term, we will evaluate how successful we were in this attempt. With both a new EV secretariat and new HSG secretariat, there is still a bit of a learning curve on both sides (on what we expect from each other).

In general terms, the majority of EV scholarships have been funded by grants from some specific donors and stakeholders, as well as by our partner institutions. Of course, there are also a few cases of EVs from high income countries (HIC) who scored high in the selection process, and were either funded by their own affiliated institutions/organizations or self-funded. Over the years, the primary funder has been the Belgian Development Cooperation (via the Institute of Tropical Medicine at Antwerp - where EV was born), and the 'overlapping scholarships' via HSG have also been quite important since we became a TWG, though for some ventures more than others.

In addition, we also have received funding in the past from the Alliance for Health Systems and Policy Research, Peking University, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, University of the Western Cape, University of Cape Town, HRH 2030 (USAID), Health

Systems Transformation Platform, Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, and now, the Gates Foundation. It should be noted that these partner institutions have supported EV not just with funding but also by building the academic component of various ventures (e.g. evaluation of candidates, providing facilitators and guest speakers for the ventures, and helping in the evaluation itself of the Emerging Voices network). Also, given that EV does not have a legal entity, some partner institutions have helped us to receive funds and provide back up with contracts. During the EV2020 (Dubai) venture, for example, this was done by the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government.

Funding, as mentioned, has been harder to get, venture after venture ever since 2015. So when we start preparing for the next venture, we do it with a high level of uncertainty, not knowing how many EVs we will be able to include and how many will be funded, or by whom. Fundraising, despite its importance, also has not been a very "sexy" taskforce, and very few alumni have been interested in being part of it. We know, it is not the most glamorous part to ask for money, but without money, we can not continue providing opportunities such as our biannual program to capable people with the potential to change the game in global health and in local health systems.

Finally, it should be noted that these "visible costs" are accompanied by many other "invisible costs", covered by all the voluntary work done by EV alumni, partner institutions, friends and supporters of EV over the years.

An important part of these “invisible costs” are covered by Governance Board Members, who - as is the case in many boards - work on a voluntary basis. This probably works (well) for some organizations where board members are well established in their careers and lives, but in the case of the EV alumni this is not the most common situation: quite a few of us are struggling with unstable jobs or working and living in conflict, war or “fragile” contexts.

So, from now on, we will inform the candidates who our funders are. We thank the unexpected effect that the GF funding brought to our discussions. Yes, we need more transparency, but also, more honesty. At the same time, we shall consider the concept of corporate responsibility as applicable to the EV context and continue to seek out appropriate and available donors. And do not worry, we will make sure that all EV alumni, no matter their funding source, will maintain the ‘constructive disruption’ DNA and ‘critical voice’ that are key for EVs. All feedback and inputs on securing this, are most welcomed and important to us, since nihil de nobis sine nobis (“Nothing About Us Without Us”).

Kick-off EV Taskforces

by Kristof Decoster, Former Liaison ITM with EV Governance Team

After a call sent out by the Secretariat in December, we welcomed many EV alumni to the taskforces. Some of these taskforces were already in place, others will be instrumental in the build-up to the EV2022 venture in Medellin/Bogota, Colombia.

A quick overview perhaps. In most of the taskforces, either Governance members or the Secretariat (and sometimes both) steer the process and activities. But there is no way they could do so without your contributions. Which is much appreciated.



The ‘governance and strategy’ taskforce is led by our Chair, Sara Ardila. As for taskforces related to EV 2022 in Colombia, the EV selection taskforce is already in full swing (deadline call: 15 April). The EV distance stage taskforce is slowly getting started (among others with key roles for Francis, Jean-Paul and Charles), and the same will be true for the EV face-to-face stage taskforce in the coming months. Preparations for EV2022 have been ongoing for a while, with Cesar (EV 2020) and Nandini (the new ITM liaison in the EV governance team) playing a key role in this respect, together with Sara.

The EV alumni and communications taskforces have been merged, at least till Bogota - one of the aims there, is to also ensure a smooth transition (with both Radhika and Kristof going to be a lot less involved after Bogota).

A pilot mentorship scheme has been set up for a number of new EVs who expressed interest, and is overseen by Co-Chair Charles. And last but not least, Tatiana, the Co-Chair/Treasurer is in charge of the fundraising and audit taskforce.

As already mentioned, the EV governance team and EV secretariat is very grateful as many of you desire, and others want to continue to contribute to the network. The EV Governance team and EV Secretariat remain very grateful, as many of you desire and others continue to contribute to the network, which often competes with work and family commitments, more so during this COVID-19 period. Many thanks!

EV Website and Database Revamp

by Cheruiyot F. Onyambu, Emerging Voices Secretariat

Late last year we embarked on an exercise of updating our EV Alumni database. The main reason for this was to facilitate (more) engagement from and with the EVs as well as networking amongst the EV alumni and beyond.

The revamped EV alumni website is categorized into two sections: public view and 'EV-only view'. The public view can be accessed by anyone and contains only basic information on the EVs such as: cohort year, WHO region, designation, specialty and bio. The 'EV-only view' has more details including EVs' contacts, Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR) or other profiles, Twitter handles, Orchid ID, and other interests.

In the coming months we would also like to move some of our discussions (eg: the monthly discussion topic) from the Google group to the website, but this requires one to log in and thus create one's own account first. Only then, you will be able to contribute to the discussions. This platform is not only open to EVs but also other members of the Thematic Working Group (TWG), (who also need to log in).

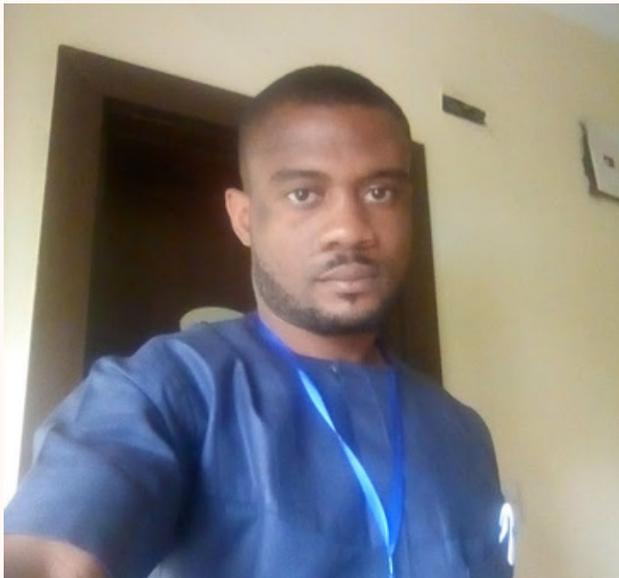
Thus far, updates of profiles on the website have not been as we would have liked and we encourage more EV alumni to log in and update profiles on this link: <https://ev4gh.net/alumni/> Do also encourage EVs from your own cohort or region to do so (for example, if they have changed email accounts, so that they do not get Google group messages anymore). Keep in mind, occasionally other stakeholders and donors do check out the EV website and database, so it is good to keep your profile updated (as well as ensure good 'keywords').

In case of any questions on updating your profile, please reach out to ev4ghinfo@aphrc.org for assistance.

My journey so far as a member of the EV TWG

by Ikenna Ebiri, EV Thematic Working Group 2020 Member

I became a member of the EV Thematic Working Group (EV TWG) in 2020. This helped me to truly improve my world, synergize with contemporary thinkers and networks across the world who share similar values with me on the global health policy and system research. Being a member of the EV TWG has guided my passion for writing, research and health system strengthening. I have had two abstracts accepted internationally and [one action brief published with WHO](#).



One major lesson that I have picked on is that collaborative models and systemic approaches are the ways to achieve UHC. I have increasing access to the latest news, trends, and updates as regards health system strengthening. Being a member of our highly esteemed EV4GH community, stirs you up to maximize innovative training methods and activities that would enable you to impact fellow emerging researchers, other health system actors, and change agents to present their work effectively and engage on various global health platforms.

Lastly, I vigorously encourage every young researcher from the Global South to apply for the next EV cohort and join the global network of EVs which fosters networking and learning across contexts and regions. I am currently a member of Health System Global (HSG) and would be glad to see you become a member of the EV4GH TWG or EV4GH 2022, if selected, after the training program.

This I know will help us catalyze an enriched future for all. I am fully persuaded that Positive Impact, which is social progress and commercial growth can be achieved in the Global South.

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