

THE ACADEMIC NETWORK ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS POLICY

ACTIVITY REPORT 2016-2017

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ANSER

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1 SHORT INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and scope

In September 2015, 193 governments formally approved a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as a follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that expired end 2015. In light of this, governments across the world are required to develop and implement new policies in the coming years in order to achieve the targets set for these goals. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) lies at the immediate intersect of SDG3 (ensure healthy lives), SDG5 (achieve gender equality) and SDG10 (reduce inequalities), and has a direct link to many other goals. As a consequence, SRHR should have a central position in these new policies. The development of these new policies necessitates an evidence base to ensure their adequacy and effectiveness. Also, the success of their implementation is closely linked to reliable follow-up and monitoring by professionals with the required training and expertise. Finally, regular exchange of knowledge and sharing of experiences between different types of stakeholders and different countries can contribute to improving existing approaches and policies.

1.2 Aims

In light of the above, Ghent University established an Academic Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy (ANSER) that aims to become a global resource for SRHR policy research, education and service delivery by establishing an international platform for research on SRHR policy related topics; by developing a portfolio of education and training programmes on SRHR policy; and by fostering interaction between SRHR researchers and policy makers.

1.3 Structure

The ANSER members meet once a year physically for a General Assembly and several meetings, seminars and workshops. During the General Assembly, modalities of collaboration are discussed, plans for new initiatives are presented and new members are accepted.

In-between General Assembly's, the focus lies with working groups and task forces that communicate through phone conferences, mail and the Zephyr platform. Working groups and task forces report to the coordinator of the network. General communications and consultations involving all members go through e-mail and Zephyr.

1.4 Partners

ANSER includes Ghent University academic staff from five faculties: Medicine and Health Sciences, Psychology and Educational Sciences, Political and Social Sciences, Arts and Philosophy, and Law. At the moment of submission, ANSER included 17 academic institutions covering all regions of the world, in 2016 7 new partners joined.

Currently ANSER has 24 member institutions:

- Centre for International Health, Burnet institute (Australia)
- Woman & Child Health Research Centre, Institute of Tropical Medicine (Belgium)
- Faculty of Medicine, Laboratory for Research in Human Reproduction, Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)
- Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Faculty of Sociology, Faculty of Arts & Philosophy, Faculty of Law, Ghent University (Belgium)
- School of Medicine, Research Centre for public Health, Tsinghua University (China)
- Social Medicine Centre, National Research Institute for Family Planning (China)
- WHO Collaborating Centre in Reproductive Health and Population Science, Institute of Population Research (China)
- Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Cuenca (Ecuador)

- Population and Family Health (Reproductive Health), Jimma University (Ethiopia)
- Department of social Psychology, University of Potsdam (Germany)
- Division of Infectious Diseases and Tropical Medicine, Klinikum of Ludwig- Maximilians- Universität (Germany)
- Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health, Aga Khan University East-Africa (Kenia)
- Africa Coordinating Centre for the Abandonment of FGM/C-Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Nairobi University (Kenya)
- Faculty of Medicine, Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique)
- Department of children and adolescent, Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (Norway)
- Institute of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, International Public health & Biostatistics, Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal)
- Foundation for Professional Development (South-Africa)
- Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Women's and Children's Health, Karolinska Institutet (Sweden)
- Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit, University of St. Andrews (United Kingdom)
- Faculty of Sociology and Social Philosophy, Social Sciences, Edge Hill University (United Kingdom)
- Health and Life sciences: Centre for Communities and Social Justice, Coventry University (United Kingdom)
- John Urban Health Institute, Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health,
- Johns Hopkins University (United States)
- Gender and Women Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology - Institute of Interdisciplinary Training and Research (Uganda)

In 2017, there were five new applications for membership:

- Department of Women's and Children's Health, Uppsala University (Sweden)
- Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex (VK)
- University of the Western Cape (South-Africa)
- Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Riga Stradins University (Latvia)
- Centre for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies, University of Antwerp (Belgium)

These new memberships will be officialised at the General Assembly of 30 November 2017.

2 ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUT

2.1 Development of the network

A first crucial activity of ANSER was the creation of an academic community around the topic of SRHR policy. We surveyed the different members to learn about their priorities and based on these suggestions we have set up a number of thematic working group: 1) adolescent SRHR, 2) SRHR monitoring and evaluation, 3) contraception, family planning and abortion, 4) sexual health, 5) gender, rights and interpersonal violence. We have created a Zephyr space for ANSER through which these working groups communicate and through which documents are shared. In the course of 2017, a task force was set up for the development of e-learning courses.

ANSER has received a number of request to link with other organisations and networks, such as from Erasmus University Rotterdam to beta-test a newly developed evidence portal indicating the value for money achieved by a wide range of interventions including SRHR and from EuroNGOs, a European network of civil society organisations working around SRHR policy and advocacy in the context of international development, on collaboration on their annual international conference.

2.2 Launch



Laura Derycke, medical student at Ghent University.

On November 30th 2016 ANSER was officially launched. This festive event took place at event centre New Zebra. Several high level speakers took the stage to stress the importance of ANSER and express their expectations towards the network, including Miss Elke Sleurs, Secretary of State for a.o. Scientific Policy and Dr Metin Gulmezoglu, Human Reproduction Programme (HRP) of the World Health Organization. The speeches were followed by a debate on "What role for ANSER in the global SRHR scene?" moderated by Sander Spanoghe (department Flanders International) with Dr Metin Gulmezoglu, Sietske Steneker, Director UNFPA Brussels, Neil Datta, Secretary of the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development and

2.3 International conference

On 1 and 2 December 2016, the ANSER Network organised its first international conference. The purpose of the conference was to present research results in the field of SRHR, discuss their implications for policy and link researchers with policy makers. The conference was open to all researchers, policy makers, students and others interested in SRHR policy research and about 120 people coming from 23 different countries from around the world were registered. The conference was abstract-driven and focused on 6 main themes: 1) adolescent SRHR, 2) abortion, contraception and family planning, 3) gender, rights and interpersonal violence, 4) rights and policy perspectives, 5) SRHR monitoring and evaluation, 6) maternal health. A short video illustrating the atmosphere during these two days can be found here: <http://www.ugent.be/anser/en/news-events/news/conference2016>.

Parallel to this international conference, the different working groups of ANSER met to discuss areas for collaboration.

2.4 Doctoral School 'Global Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights'

From 24 until 28 April 2017, UGent and Karolinska Institutet organised within the context of ANSER a specialized doctoral schools course on 'Global Sexual Reproductive Health'. Lectures took place in both Stockholm and Ghent and were made accessible through live streaming to the participants at the other site.

In total 30 PhD students participated (17 in Gent and 13 in Stockholm). Lecturers were experts in the field of SRH and topics were among others SRHR within the SDG framework, social determinants of health, legal aspects of SRHR, maternal health, family planning, SRHR and adolescents, and SRHR research methods. All lectures were recorded and are available.

2.5 Summer School 'Reproductive Health and Rights'

A 'Summer School Reproductive Health and Rights', organised by students from the Belgian Medical Students' Association (BEMSA) and ANSER, took place in Ghent from 3 until 12 July 2017 with the cooperation of many renowned lecturers. Thirteen students from across the world participated. The multicultural mix of students from very diverse backgrounds contributed to the educational quality of the course. The next Summer School will take place from 1 until 12 July 2018.

2.6 Internships and staff mobility

ANSER developed in the course of 2017 regulations for supporting and encouraging mobility and internships, aimed at strengthening the contacts and collaboration between network partners, and at the same time jointly working in

specific ANSER output. It is expected that mobility and internships will take off mainly in 2018, but some initiatives already took place in 2017:

-Internship of Charlotte Oliveira at ICRH

During two months Charlotte Oliveira had the opportunity to behold an internship at ICRH (Ghent University). As a PhD student on International Health, from Instituto de Higiene e Medicina Tropical, from Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal) she continued the work on her research on gender based violence among refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and professionals, living and working in European asylum reception centres and was involved in activities of ICRH, such as scientific discussions and trainings. A brief report of her stay can be found on the ANSER website.

-Short stay of Prof. Hazel Barrett and Dr.Tammary Esho at ICRH

From June 9 to June 16, Prof Hazel Barrett was visiting ICRH. Together with prof Els Leye, she discussed and explored some opportunities for developing joint proposals and joint papers, on the topic of female genital mutilation, and other joint practices. The visit resulted in some concrete proposals for a joint paper, and two proposals for H2020 and the Daphne Programme.

Dr Tammary Esho from Nairobi University in Kenya, visited Prof Leye as well, on the 20th of June. They discussed the role of ACCAF, the African Training and Research Centre on Female Genital Mutilation attached to the University of Nairobi, within ANSER, as well as opportunities to develop joint proposals or collaborations on FGM and child marriage.

-PhD student exchange within ANSER

During two weeks in April 2017, PhD student Anna Galle from Ghent University visited International Maternal and Child Health at Uppsala University and worked with researchers from Karolinska University.

The main focus was on SRHR in general, and more specifically SRHR in Mozambique. Anna participated in the master course in SRHR where she held lectures and reviewed assignments. Anna's visit has contributed to the collaboration within ANSER network between the institutions of Karolinska Institute and IMCH/Uppsala, Sweden, ICRH/Ghent University, and Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique.

2.7 Workshop 'Sexual harassment in the Academy'

On Tuesday May 2nd, the Centre for Ethics and Value Inquiry (CEVI), the Network for Sexual Ethics and Politics (INSEP) and ANSER jointly organized a one-day workshop on Sexual Harassment in the Academy in Het Pand in Ghent, Belgium.

This one-day workshop sought to outline the problem, look at some contemporary policy and practice responses and then explore some strategies for prevention and change. The workshop resulted in plans for a seminar that will take place in the spring of 2018 in Gent.

2.8 Joint proposal of Mbarara University and Ludwig Maximilians accepted on SRH needs of refugee adolescent girls in Uganda

Two ANSER members - Elizabeth Kemigisha from Mbarara University and Olena Ivanova from Ludwig Maximilians University - who had met during the ANSER meeting in December 2016 in Ghent - jointly wrote a proposal that was accepted for external funding. The title of the project is 'A situation analysis of sexual and reproductive health needs and access to contraception among refugee adolescent girls in Uganda'.

2.9 Review of the national SRH strategie of Moldova

On request of the World Health Organization, ANSER reviewed the draft national SRH strategy of the Republic of Moldova. A number of ANSER members worked together to evaluate the strategy in terms of consistency and coherence,

scientific underpinning and alignment with the general SRHR strategy of the WHO Euro Region. The report was submitted in April 2017.

2.10 Collaboration with UNFPA

In September 2017, negotiations between ANSER and the SRHR advisor of UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia led to plans for trainings for national policy makers in the field of indicators and monitoring systems, and for the evaluations of national strategies and policies. Follow-up talks with the aim to come to concrete agreements will take place at the end of 2017.

2.11 ANSER Week 27 November – 1 December 2017

In the week of 27 November to 1 December, most ANSER members will meet in Belgium for a number of ANSER activities in Brussels and Gent:

- Monday 27 November: **EU-China Health Forum** in Brussels. This conference is open to non-ANSER members.
- Tuesday 28 November: **Seminar/round table 'The glass wall between science and policy'** in Brussels. This conference is open to non-ANSER members.
- Wednesday 29 November: **workshop 'Linking Research to Policy Making' and training on online courses** (Gent).
- Thursday 30 November: **workshop 'Drafting outlines for joint publications' and ANSER General Assembly** (Gent).
- Friday 1 December: **workshop 'LGBTIQ: rights and access to health care'** (open to non-ANSER members) and **workshop 'joint research proposals'** (Gent).

2.12 Online courses

Preparations have started for the development of online modules on SRHR policy. An IT platform has been identified and the first module (on female genital mutilation) is in development. In 2018 modules on other topics will be developed.

3 BRANDING: MEDIA, EVENTS, PUBLICITIES

The ANSER website is online since the spring of 2016: www.ugent.be/anser/en and a logo has been designed.

ANSER was presented in several publications and received quite some media attention on the occasion of the launch and the international conference at the end of 2016. An ANSER newsletter keeps members and subscribers informed on activities.

Public presentations of ANSER took place at among others the Scientific Days of the University of Nairobi on 26 January 2017, for Be-Cause Health in Brussels on 9 September 2017 and at the ECTMIH conference in Antwerp on 17 October 2017.

In February 2017, a delegation of Ghent University, headed by the rector of Ghent University, Prof. dr. Anne De Paepe, visited Cuenca University in Ecuador. During this visit, the close collaboration between both institutions was reaffirmed and Kristien Michielsens (ICRH, Ghent University) and Bernardo Vega (Cuenca University) gave a presentation on ANSER. An ANSER plaque was offered to Cuenca University as a token of gratitude for its contributions to the network.