

## **Evidence for Better Lives Study (EBLS)**

### **EARLY CAREER RESEARCH NETWORK (ECRN)**

EBLS aims to generate interesting, innovative research that can, through various pathways, lead to lasting improvements in family environments and the health and social care systems that influence child development. Focused on middle-income countries, EBLS will involve families, communities, health systems and universities to address the urgent need for evidence to improve policies, programmes and services.

EBLS has a long-term vision to support synchronised birth cohort studies over many years. Central to the success of our work is to foster a new generation of researchers to carry the study forward and ensure sustainable impact. The **EBLS Early Career Research Network** connects a diverse group of people in the early stages of their careers. It includes research staff, postdoctoral fellows, PhD and Master Students, and early-career professional collaborators in each site.

Members learn from each other scientifically and culturally to gain deep insights into the many complex factors that affect child and maternal health. There are practical benefits from sharing resources (such as literature reviews, research protocols, data analysis' plans and publications). Through regular meetings and social media engagement, we hope strong collaborations will develop and new ideas will emerge to shape EBLS in the coming years.

Worldwide, there are many Early Career Networks in health and social sciences. Some start with promise but do not thrive; others create a strong identity, have sustained energy and produce practical benefits. After several rounds of consultation since June 2018, the EBLS collaborators nominated individuals from each site (listed in the following page).

## ECRN members

### 1. Ghana



**Henrieta Tagoe Dzotsi** has an MPhil in Social Work (2016) at the University of Ghana. She is prospecting for a PhD in Psychology or Public Mental Health with a strong interest in the mental health of women living with a chronic condition.

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**Dacosta Wereko** holds a B.A. degree in Psychology with Political Science. He has completed an MPhil in Clinical Psychology at the University of Ghana, Legon, and he is awaiting graduation. He has an interest in examining fathers' involvement in maternal health care. He is currently prospecting for a PhD programme in Psychology.

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### 2. Jamaica



**Carene Lindsay**, MSc, is a Research Project Coordinator at the Epidemiology Research Unit, University of the West Indies, Jamaica. She has an MA in Nutrition and has been involved with research working on studies with cohort of stunted children and controls in Jamaican and Ghanaian populations.

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**Dr Joanne Smith** is a Lecturer at the Epidemiology Research Unit, Caribbean Institute for Health Research, at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. She graduated with a PhD in Nutrition in 2014 from the University of the West Indies. Her interests include developing innovative interventions for the holistic development of children globally, with a special interest in children who live in lower- and middle-income countries.

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### 3. Pakistan



**Dr Fahad Abbasi** is a medical doctor and emerging public health professional. He completed his Master's degree in Public Health from the Health Services Academy, Islamabad. Dr Abbasi has been an intern at the Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, and worked under its Prime Minister's National Health Program. He has been involved in scientific annual conferences as organising team member. He has worked in the media industry, including radio and television for over a decade, promoting and disseminating information on social and health issues. His area of research includes ECD, maternal and child health. Email: [idrfahadabbasi@gmail.com](mailto:idrfahadabbasi@gmail.com)



**Dr Yasmeen Anwer** is a medical doctor with an MS in Public Health. She explored the relationships between Childhood Adversities, Intimate Partner Violence during pregnancy, and Perinatal Depression in the feasibility study data of EBLIS for her Master's thesis. She is a Junior Research Fellow and coordinates research in a multisectoral project to improve mental health services in Primary Healthcare and communities. Her areas of interest are: violence against children & women, maternal mental health, psychotherapeutic interventions, social determinants of health & wellbeing, and policy & governance. Email: [yasmeenanwer56@gmail.com](mailto:yasmeenanwer56@gmail.com)

### 4. Philippines



**Dr Sandra Hernandez** is a Child Protection Specialist at the Philippine General Hospital's Child Protection Unit. She is the Director for Research of the Child Protection Network Foundation and a member of the Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Study Group under the Institute of Child Health and Human Development, University of the Philippines, Manila National Institutes of Health. She has worked on research on child maltreatment prevention, online sexual abuse and exploitation, and violence against children. Email: [sandrastuartherndz@gmail.com](mailto:sandrastuartherndz@gmail.com)



**Janelle Tan** is a graduate student doing her Master's thesis on parental warmth at the Department of Psychology of the University of the Philippines Diliman. She is teaching psychology at the Department of Behavioral Sciences at the University of the Philippines Manila. She has worked in research and community intervention projects against online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Her research interests include the influence of culture and neighborhood on parental warmth and child outcomes.

## 5. Romania



**Madalina Ruxandra Costin** is a Psychology PhD student at Babeş Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She has a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology, Psychological Counselling and Psychotherapy. She is a psychotherapist and also works as a research coordinator in the project Parenting for Longlife Health. Her main area of interest is the relationship between the prenatal maternal mental health/attitudes and the socio emotional development of children. She began as a

fieldworker in EBLs in 2019 and now helps with the coordination around the sites. Email: [madalinacostin@psychology.ro](mailto:madalinacostin@psychology.ro)

## 6. South Africa



**Stefani Du Toit** is a researcher at the Institute for Life Course Health Research, Stellenbosch University. She completed her BA Humanities degree at Stellenbosch University and graduated from the University of South Africa with an Honours degree in Psychology. She obtained her Master's degree from Stellenbosch University, where she studied the effect of prenatal methamphetamine exposure on brain development. She is currently working towards a PhD, studying adolescent

depression in the context of adversity. Email: [dutoits@sun.ac.za](mailto:dutoits@sun.ac.za)

## 7. Sri Lanka



**Dr Shobhavi Randeny** MBBS (Sri Lanka) MD (Colombo) is working as a Paediatrician in the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka. She is aspiring to join the Department of Paediatrics at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya. Her areas of clinical and research interest are child abuse, prevention of child's neglect and adolescent health issues. She is a member of the Sri Lanka's EBLs team.

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**Deshani Chathurika**, BSc (Hons) in Health Promotion. An enthusiastic researcher who has worked in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Kelaniya for over two years, she has experience working in a special facility for children who have faced violence. She is a member of the Sri Lanka's EBLs team and will act as a full-time research associate. Email: [deshaniechathurika@gmail.com](mailto:deshaniechathurika@gmail.com)

## 8. Vietnam



**Do Phuc Huyen**, BPH, MPH, graduated as Master of Public Health at QUT in 2012 and is currently a PhD student at QUT. She worked in public health research and advocacy roles for the past seven years in Hanoi, Vietnam. She has visited the ICHR and her main data collection will be in the Hue's EBLS site.

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**Dr Luong Thanh Bao Yen, MD, MPH** graduated as a medical doctor from Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Vietnam and obtained her Master degree of Public Health in Biostatistics at Khon Kaen University in Thailand. She has been working as a lecturer in Biostatistics and is also a research fellow at the Institute for Community Health Research of Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy. Her research interests focus on maternal and child health. She EBLS

in 2017 as a project coordinator in Hue city, Vietnam. Email: [ltbyen@huemed-univ.edu.vn](mailto:ltbyen@huemed-univ.edu.vn)

## 9. International (non-EBLS site) members



**Dr Ruth Brown** was awarded her PhD in March 2019 at the University at Edinburgh. Her doctoral thesis investigated the causes and consequences of alexithymia in children and adults from the general populace. She also holds an MSc in Psychological Research and a BSc in Biological Sciences. Ruth is currently working as a research assistant alongside Dr Aja Murray at the University of Edinburgh as part of EBLS. Her work within EBLS has focused on

foetal attachment, prenatal mental health and the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. Her other research interests include alexithymia, substance misuse and the consequences of adverse childhood experiences. Email: [rbrown11@exseed.ed.ac.uk](mailto:rbrown11@exseed.ed.ac.uk)



**Laura Campo** joined the Evidence for Better Lives (EBLS) in 2018 as the study coordinator. She is currently a PhD candidate at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. Laura's doctoral research explores longitudinal associations between adolescent dating violence victimisation and mental health and wellbeing outcomes, with a particular interest in the influence of resilience factors on the effects of victimisation. Email: [lc749@cam.ac.uk](mailto:lc749@cam.ac.uk)

*International (non-EBLS site) members, continued*



**Sarika Dewan** is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. Her research focuses on the impact of maternal exposure to intimate partner violence on child malnutrition in post-conflict northern Uganda, examining the mediating roles of maternal depression and maternal child care. She holds a BSc in Psychology from the University of York and a MSc in Crime

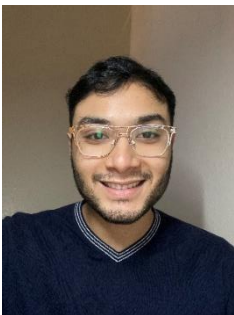
Science from University College London. She is particularly interested in violence prevention and child protection in LMICs, across the Sustainable Development Goals. Email: [smd80@cam.ac.uk](mailto:smd80@cam.ac.uk)



**Dr Sarah Foley** defended her Viva on 'Emerging Parental Sensitivity: the Transition to Parenthood Through the Lens of Family Systems Theory' in March at the Centre for Family Research, Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge. She works on the prospective longitudinal international New Fathers' and Mothers' Study based in Cambridge (UK), Leiden (Netherlands) and New York (USA). Her

main area of interest is prenatal and partner predictors of postnatal parent adjustment and sensitivity.

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**Chad Hemady** is doctoral candidate at the University of Edinburgh, exploring latent classes of adverse childhood experiences and their association with health risks behaviours during pregnancy (substance use) and poor infant outcomes (premature birth, low birth weight) using the EBLS dataset. He has worked on research involving child-maltreatment prevention and participatory research with children and young people. He is particularly interested in addressing online and offline child sexual

abuse and exploitation. Email: [Chad.Hemady@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Chad.Hemady@ed.ac.uk)



**Dr Linda Murray** is a Lecturer in Public Health at Massey University (Aotearoa New Zealand) and a Massey University Early Career Medallist (2020) with research interests in maternal and child health, health inequities and the social determinants of health. She has experience in quantitative and qualitative health research investigating sensitive topics with vulnerable populations (i.e. mental

health, parenting, experiences of violence and post-disaster interviewing). She conducted her PhD on postnatal depression in Vietnam in collaboration with the ICHR at Hue University as part of a Prime Minister's Asia Australia Award. She has also held a postdoctoral fellowship at Hue University (Cheung Kong Endeavour Fellowship). Email: [l.murray1@massey.ac.nz](mailto:l.murray1@massey.ac.nz)

*International (non-EBLS site) members, continued*



**Klea Ramaj** is a PhD candidate in Criminology at the University of Cambridge. Her project explores the pathways between maternal exposure to violence and early child development in Tirana, Albania, with a particular focus on maternal mental well-being and parenting practices as mediating variables. She holds a BA in Liberal Arts and Sciences (cum laude) from University College Maastricht (UCM) and an MPhil in Criminological Research from the University of Cambridge. Klea has received numerous awards throughout her academic career, including the Cambridge International Scholarship (funded by Cambridge Trust and Newnham College), the Manuel López-Rey Studentship and the UCM Scholarship. Email: [kr451@cam.ac.uk](mailto:kr451@cam.ac.uk)



**Dr Sara Valdebenito** holds a PhD in Criminology from the University of Cambridge and is a Research Associate for the EBLS project in Cambridge. She has worked on several projects targeting the early prevention of crime in school settings with a focus on meta-analytic findings. Sara's work has been supported by the Campbell Collaboration, the Nuffield Foundation and Becas Chile. Her main areas of interest are child victimisation, school bullying, child punishment and parents' mental health. Email: [sv331@cam.ac.uk](mailto:sv331@cam.ac.uk)



**Siu-Ching Wong**, MSc, is a research assistant of Dr Aja Murray at the Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh. Her research focuses on domestic violence against women, child development and student mental health. She is interested in using quantitative tools to investigate multidisciplinary problems in the fields mentioned, especially in domestic violence during pregnancy and neurodevelopmental difficulties. Email: [s.c.wong-1@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:s.c.wong-1@sms.ed.ac.uk)

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