



## **Report on the Realising Rights Writing Workshop**

APHRC held a Realising Rights Writing Workshop for Early Career Researchers in Nairobi on 11-20 November, 2008.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- strengthen the capacity of researchers working on SRHR in the RPC countries and the East Africa Region
- support the professional development of young researchers within organisations (with long-term benefits for research institutes)
- provide opportunities for south-south and north-south interaction between researchers and networking between researchers in different institutions working across RPC projects or themes

The workshop was attended by ten early career researchers working on sexual and reproductive health, including 2 from Bangladesh, 3 from Ghana, 1 from Ethiopia, 3 from Kenya and 1 from Malawi. The participants were competitively selected through a call for extended abstracts related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, which was circulated to research institutes in Bangladesh, Ghana and eastern Africa in May 2008. The selected papers involve a range of disciplines and methodologies and cover topics including young people's reproductive health, private reproductive health providers, STI risk among married and unmarried young women, maternal and neonatal care practices, use of contraception among urban poor women, differential couple's fertility preferences, and experiences of HIV-positive mothers. The workshop was supported by the UK Department for International Development, through the Realising Rights Research Programme Consortium on 'Improving sexual and reproductive health in poor and vulnerable populations' and the British Council-administered Development Partnerships in Higher Education.



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The workshop involved 3 days of training in writing methods, followed by a 5 day 'writeshop' at APHRC where participants worked on developing their own papers. Each participant was also partnered with a senior researcher mentor with expertise in their subject area. The mentors will provide advice and feedback on 2 drafts of their paper in the two months following the workshop.

The workshop was facilitated by Chi-Chi Undie, Joanna Crichton and Eliya Zulu from APHRC and Joanna Busza from LSHTM. The mentors are researchers including Blessing Mberu, Catherine Kyobutungi, Eliya Zulu, Jean-Christophe Fotso, Caroline Kabiru and Chima Izugbara from APHRC, Sabina Faiz Rashid BRAC, Hilary Standing from IDS, and Sally Theobald from Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and LSHTM.



### ***Feedback from participants***

All participants completed evaluation forms at the end of the three days of training. The feedback from participants was generally enthusiastic about the usefulness of the workshop. Participants were asked to specify how useful they found the workshop (overall and each individual session) according to the following categories: "Not at all useful", "A little useful", "Useful" and "Very useful". These results are presented in Table 1. "Overall, 68% of the responses were "very useful", 29% were "useful" and 3% "a little useful".

**Table 1: Participants ratings of the usefulness of the workshop**

<b>Session title</b>	<b>Not at all useful</b>	<b>A little useful</b>	<b>Useful</b>	<b>Very useful</b>
Why Publish? Targeting Journals			2	8
Overcoming Writer's Block			5	5
Storyline and argument			3	7
Linking your study to the literature			3	7
Communication and Language tips for scientific writing			2	8
Writing abstracts, introductions, background and rational, and literature review sections			4	6
Quantitative Methods and Presentation of Results		1	4	4
Qualitative Methods and Presentation of Results			1	9

Reference manager		2	4	4
Overall reflections on the three days of training			1	9

Participants were also asked to explain which aspects of the workshop they liked most, which aspects they liked least, and whether they recommended any changes for future workshops of this kind.

Participants found the workshop a useful source of motivation and encouragement towards writing and publishing. They particularly valued the kind of tips that come with experience, such as how to save yourself time by browsing journals to select a target journal from the start and tailoring the paper to the journal's requirements. Participants said they really enjoyed the interactive nature of the training and appreciated the opportunity for discussion and the preparedness of presenters to answer questions at any time.



Participants were really keen for knowledge and support in writing, and many mentioned to the organizers that they often feel alone and unsupported in this process. They were keen to continue to be in contact with the facilitators, and to receive future support if possible. They also found motivation in the personal stories facilitators told about their experiences with publication, including challenges, frustrations and successes.

When asked what they liked least and what could be improved in future conferences, the most common comments from participants were that they would like more time for each session. This points to a strong demand for extended training on research and writing methods among the participants. Indeed, some participants commented that they would have liked the workshop to cover qualitative and quantitative analysis methods and how to use theories and conceptual frameworks, even though this was not the purpose of the workshop.



Another very common comment from participants was that including more exercises and time for applying the skills to their own work would facilitate learning. A few participants thought it would be very helpful if facilitators could review the exercises once they had completed them, and then provide feedback on their work. Participants also said they would find it useful if presenters could provide more specific examples, and avoid speaking in general terms. One participant mentioned that they would find it more useful to have the handouts distributed in hard copy at the start of each session. Another participant commented that presenters could better plan the time for their presentations, so that they are not rushed at the end. Indeed, some of the sessions ran over their time allocation because participants were enthusiastically engaged in discussions, but this reduced time for subsequent sessions and meant that there was a lack of time to cover other important issues. This suggests that although flexibility can be effective in facilitating small workshops, it's also important to take into account the volume of content to be covered when making decisions about adjusting timeframes.

### ***Ideas for future training workshops***

Some of the ideas emerging from participants' feedback and the organisers' experience with the workshop are:

- Access to the internet during the training, to assist with providing specific examples (e.g., during the session looking at journals) or with practical demonstrations (e.g., session on Reference Manager)
- Be specific:
  - Include a discussion on critiquing specific scientific papers
  - Provide more specific examples from journals and papers
  - Provide more feedback on participant's own work, eg through reviewing exercises completed during the training
- Ensure the most popular sessions are long enough
- Allow time for participants to do exercises during and after the session to internalize what they've learned
- Include information on conceptual frameworks, theories and models and how to link them to the literature in both qualitative and quantitative research
- Communications staff could be invited to future writing workshops



Finally, here are a few quotes from participants:

*"Full of interactions. Very useful in guiding young scientists"*

*"...there were things I took for granted, not any more..."*

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*“What I liked most is the content of the workshop. It is very important and gives the skills not only for a researcher in earlier career stage but also throughout the ladder. Besides, the opportunity of sharing experience with other researchers in the continent is a big opening to widen our scope of a health research.”*

*“Excellent presentations, informative and depth of knowledge. Good facilitators – participants interaction”*

*“The presenters really allowed for participants to ask as many questions and had a lot of patience in responding to issues”*

### Appendix 1: List of participants and papers

Name	Organisation	Country	Paper title
Solomon Abotiba Atinbire	Navrongo Health Research centre	Ghana	Exploring the Geographic Dimension of Adolescent Reproductive health in the Kassina-Nankana District of northern Ghana
Nathaniel Yellu	Health Research Unit, Ghana Health Service	Ghana	Partnership for Improved Reproductive Health Service Provision by Pharmaceutical Service Providers in Ghana
Fabian Achana	Navrongo Health Research Centre	Ghana	Is marriage protective? Risk Factors for Sexually Transmitted Infections among Young Women in Northern Ghana
Sarawat Rashid	BRAC	Bangladesh	Maternal neonatal care practices: Cultural perspective of a village community
Nuzhat Choudhury	BRAC	Bangladesh	What do the ultra poor women do in relation to their maternal and neonatal care?
Hildah Essendi	APHRC	Nairobi	Use of contraception among the urban poor women in Kenya: a community-based study
Latifat Ibsomi	APHRC	Nairobi	Resolution of Differential Couples' Fertility Preferences: Who Holds the Key?
Lignet Kamazu	Kamazu College of Nursing, Blantyre	Malawi	Experiences Of HIV-Positive Mothers With Dependant Children In Malawi
Yordanos Molla	Addis Ababa University	Ethiopia	Sexual and reproductive health needs and service utilization of students in Addis Ababa University
Rhouné Ochako	APHRC	Kenya	Interplay between women's perceived quality of, and access to care and household wealth on the utilization of maternity services among the urban poor

## Appendix 2: Call for Abstracts



### Call for abstracts

#### **Writing workshop for early career researchers on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) is pleased to announce a writing workshop for early career researchers. The workshop is planned to be held in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2008. The exact dates of the workshop will be specified when we notify successful applicants that they have been selected for participation in the event.

We invite early career researchers from your institution working in the area of SRH & R to take part in this exciting 10 day workshop. Applicants should be PhD-level students or early career staff. Each applicant should submit a completed application form and an extended abstract of a paper that they wish to work on during the workshop to Chi-Chi Undie at APHRC at the address below by 30 June 2008. Applicants will be notified about the outcome of their submissions within approximately six weeks from the submission deadline. Travel costs to attend the meeting will be provided for the selected participants. We will also cover the costs of accommodation and subsistence for participants who are based outside Nairobi.

The workshop will begin with 3 days of training on academic writing skills, facilitated by senior researchers from a variety of disciplines related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. This will be followed by a 7-day period during which participants will work on developing their abstract into a draft paper. Each participant will be mentored by a senior academic with relevant expertise for their paper. This mentor will provide specific support and feedback to participants in developing their paper.

The paper should be in any of the following or related disciplines: anthropology, sociology, demography, public health, and public policy, and should be relevant to the broad theme of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Here are some examples of issues the papers could cover:

- Measurement of sexual and reproductive health problems and social factors that make individuals vulnerable to them

- Improving access to sexual and reproductive health services and/or technologies, particularly for poor and socially-excluded people
- How sexual and reproductive rights or socially-legitimated entitlements are understood in particular cultural settings at national or local levels
- Analysis of sexual and reproductive health policies
- Specific issues could include, but are not limited to, any of the following: family planning, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), unsafe abortion, sexuality and gender-based violence

The abstract should be double spaced and between 4 and 6 A4 pages long. The following aspects should be covered in the paper:

- Background and rationale
- Objectives and research questions
- Methods
- Analysis and results

Please include as much detail on the results as possible, rather than just focusing on the introduction and methods. One of the criteria that will be used to select participants will be how far the abstract provides evidence that there is sufficient analysis to be able to embark on writing and finalizing a journal article. Although we have indicated the areas that need to be addressed in the abstract, these areas do not have to be structured in any particular order, as this may vary for different disciplines.

We would be grateful if you could pass this information on to PhD students and early career staff at your institution. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you need any further information about this workshop.

**To apply:** complete the application form below and fax or email it, **attaching your extended abstract** to Chi-Chi Undie, African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC).

Email: [cundie@aphrc.org](mailto:cundie@aphrc.org) Fax: (254-20) 2720380.

Applications must be received by **30 June 2008**.

This workshop is supported by the Realising Rights Research Programme Consortium on 'Improving sexual and reproductive health in poor and vulnerable populations' [www.realising-rights.org](http://www.realising-rights.org)



### Appendix 3: Writing Workshop Agenda

<b>TIME</b>	<b>Tuesday 11 November</b>	<b>Wednesday 12 November</b>	<b>Thursday 13 November</b>	<b>Friday 14 November</b>	<b>Sat 15-Sun 16 November</b>	<b>Mon 17-Thurs 20 November</b>
<b>VENUE</b>	Laico Regency Hotel	Laico Regency Hotel	Laico Regency Hotel	APHRC office	Laico Regency Hotel	APHRC office
08:30-09:00	Welcome and Coffee					
9:00-9:30	<b>Introductions and expectations</b>  Facilitator: Chi-Chi Undie	<b>Linking your study to the literature</b>  Facilitator: Joanna Busza	<b>Quantitative Methods and Presentation of Results</b>  Facilitator: Eliya Zulu	9:00 Orientation at APHRC offices  Individual work on developing papers from the submitted abstracts.	Optional individual work on developing papers in Hotel facilities.  Saturday morning: a group outing (eg to Nairobi National Park)	Individual work on developing papers from the submitted abstracts.
9:30-10:30	<b>Why publish? Targeting journals</b>  Facilitator: Eliya Zulu					
<b>10.30-11:00</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>			
11:00-1:00	<b>Overcoming writers block</b>  Facilitator: Jo Crichton	<b>Abstract Introduction Background and rationale Literature review</b>  Facilitators: Eliya Zulu & Chi-Chi Undie	<b>Discussion and Conclusions</b>  Facilitators: Eliya Zulu and Chi-Chi Undie			
<b>1:00-2:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	<b>Lunch</b>			
<b>2:00-3:30</b>	<b>Storyline and argument</b>	<b>Qualitative Methods &amp; Presentation of Results</b>	<b>Principles in scientific writing</b>  Facilitator: Jo Crichton			

Facilitator: Joanna Busza

(Describing the data,

		<p>explaining data collection methods and analytical techniques, limitations of study)</p> <p>Facilitator: Chi-Chi Undie</p>				
<b>3:30-4:00</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>	<b>Tea Break</b>			
4:00-5:30			<p><b>Group exercise: a close look at published papers</b></p> <p>Facilitators: Chi-Chi Undie, Jo Crichton</p>			
<b>Evening</b>		<b>Group Dinner</b>				