



# CALL FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANCE IN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## DATE

4 February 2019

## PROJECT TITLE

Adolescent fAmily Planning: policy for sexual and reproductive health and righTs (ADAPT)

## INSTITUTION

International Centre for Reproductive Health- WHO Collaborating Centre on Sexual and Reproductive Health Research

## DEPARTMENT

Department of Public Health and Primary Care

## UNIVERSITY

Ghent University

## PERIOD OF ENGAGEMENT

Part-time, non-remunerated position. Negotiable start and end dates between February – June 2019. Working remotely is encouraged.

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development seeks to improve gender equality (SDG 5) and reduce rates of maternal mortality (SDG 3), which claims the lives of 289,000 women annually. (1) Worldwide, maternal causes (i.e. unsafe abortion, complications during pregnancy or childbirth) are the first and second most common cause of death among women aged 20-24 and 15-19 in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), respectively. (2) Adolescent pregnancies carry more medical risks for mother and child; they result in higher maternal morbidity and mortality rates than adult pregnancies.

Improving access to family planning information and services is essential to reduce maternal mortality. Achieving these goals requires adopting positive national SRH laws and policies and repealing regressive legal rules (i.e. restrictions on contraception and abortion services). However, evidence-based arguments and rational policy proposals for expanding adolescent (aged 10-19) family planning services fail to yield positive policy change in some LMICs. Moreover, most family planning interventions and strategies in LMICs heavily focus on micro-level individual knowledge and behaviour change (i.e. to increase supply and demand of family planning information and services). Interventions often neglect the macro-level/societal influences on behaviour (i.e. norm-setting agents such as mass media and law). (3) Nevertheless, macro-level interventions have the potential to socialise the best medical practice and sexual and reproductive rights to the community and individual levels, laying the foundation for wider acceptance of micro-level interventions.

National law and policy are important tools that shape legal obligations, government programmes, social norms, and the potential to hold governments accountable for fulfilling girls' and women's health rights. (1) Failing to address the norms underlying law, policy, and public health practice may be why some micro-level interventions and programmes are unable to deliver improved adolescent SRH outcomes. (4) To understand the determinants of SRH policy choices in LMICs, this project compares the policy making processes and outcomes regarding adolescent family planning in two case study countries (Kenya and Uganda). Few in-depth examinations exist of policy processes for SRH in LMICs.

The ADAPT project (ADolescent fAmily Planning: policy for sexual and reproductive health and righTs) investigates adolescent family planning policies and outcomes in Uganda and Kenya. These countries' sexual and reproductive health policy choices diverge despite their many social, political, legal, and economic similarities. For example, Ugandan government focuses sexuality education on 'value based' abstinence while the Kenyan government continues takes a rights-based approach to adolescent family planning. The results will help refine political strategies to prioritise adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights.

This project is facilitated by a 12-month VLIR-UOS and DGD (Global Minds) post doctoral operating grant awarded to Dr. Katrina Perehudoff (ICRH) under the supervision of Prof. Kristien Michielsen (ICRH). To date the project consortium includes **ICRH**, Mbarara University, the **Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development**, and **HEPS Uganda**. The ADAPT project is part of the UGent-led Academic Network on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy (ANSER).

## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The key question that the research project will investigate is: whether the recent SRH laws and policies in Uganda and Kenya adhere to WHO's standards for adolescent contraception and human rights law.

The research assistant will:

- gain knowledge of the relationship between health laws and family planning policy, public health needs, and public health outcomes in Kenya and Uganda.
- gain insights into the health policy process in the Kenyan and Ugandan con-text.

- gain experience developing an analytical framework, collecting and analysing primary sources (i.e. laws and policies), organising and interpreting the data, and drafting a journal article.
- optionally, be involved in developing a policy brief on the topic together with members of the UGent-led Academic Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy (ANSER)

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

You are enrolled in or have obtained a relevant Masters degree (i.e. in human rights, law, gender studies, public health, among other focal areas). Experience with law and/or policy analysis is an asset.

You have good oral and written communication skills in English, demonstrated in your writing sample. You have a strong ability to work independently, as well as functioning as part of a multidisciplinary and multicultural team, and with partners from Africa.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

Please send your motivation letter, cv, and a sample of your writing (i.e. essay, article, etc.) to [katrina.perehudoff@ugent.be](mailto:katrina.perehudoff@ugent.be), as soon as possible. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis from **15 February 2019** onwards until a candidate is selected.

Short-listed applicant(s) will be invited to meet the research team (in person or remotely via skype) in February 2019 to discuss the project.

No funding is available to support this research assistance. However, ICRH can support ERASMUS+ applications and other external applications for funding on a case-by-case basis.