

# EAN MONTHLY NEWSFLASH

## May Edition

### **EAN mentorship program : survey results, experiences and 2024 call**

---



The EAN board recently completed an evaluation of our pilot Mentoring Programme, first made available to year 2 EPIET, FETP and EUPHEM fellows in 2023. The evaluation was conducted among 11 EAN alumni that volunteered to be mentors and 15 fellows who requested to participate in the programme. Participants were asked to provide feedback on all aspects of the programme via an online survey -what worked well, what didn't - and moreover to provide any

suggestions on how we can improve our offering to incumbent year 2 fellows as they embark on their careers.

For those who actively engaged with the programme, the guidance provided by EAN was generally found to be clear and both the mentors and mentees reported a positive experience overall. Mentees that participated had a well-informed idea of what they wanted to achieve through the programme and they met with their mentors on average 1 to 3 times during the year. In some cases, mentees did not make contact with their mentor and reasons for this were not entirely clear from the survey. A key component of the mentorship programme is that it should be mentee driven: the mentee should initiate contact with the mentor and if the mentee decides not to make contact, this is entirely at their discretion. Additionally, after an initial meeting, both mentor and mentee can decide as to whether they want to continue or not.

It is our intention to make clearer to volunteers that both parties can request a different match if the initial match does not work for them, and they can freely withdraw at any time. Happily, all mentors and mentees reported that they would be willing to meet again in the future if needed. An additional suggestion included providing more specifics on what

advice and guidance they might expect and we will add this to the current guide. Another aspect of the programme we have discussed is training of mentors.

Irrespective, all survey respondents were supportive of continuing the programme this year and **WE CALL NOW TO ALL ALUMNI! If you are interested and willing to become a mentor, please get in touch and volunteer.** It's a great experience, as much for the mentor as the mentee and your support is hugely valued as you will see in the testimonies below. Please get in touch at [eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com).

---

### Joaquin Baruch, Mentor

"I'm a veterinarian, and after working on one health initiatives, I completed my PhD in the U.S., focusing on vaccination, diagnostics, and quantitative risk assessments for respiratory illnesses. I joined the 2020 EPIET cohort in Malta as an EU track fellow, where I had the opportunity to lead the establishment of SARI surveillance systems and vaccine effectiveness studies during the pandemic. My experiences with WHO started during my deployments to the Saharawi refugee camps in Algeria and conflict-affected areas in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, where I set up COVID-19 surveillance and contact tracing systems and supported humanitarian interventions for conflict-affected populations. After working for the University of Oxford and the Robert Koch Institute, I returned to WHO and was based in Somalia, where I coordinated cholera response activities and led the surveillance team for famine prevention. I'm currently at WHO headquarters with the meningitis emergency team, overseeing surveillance and monitoring of emergency vaccination campaigns, recently deploying to Nigeria and Niger. Since last year, I have been a mentor in the EAN mentorship program, where I value the program's ability to foster unbiased career discussions and connect professionals, embodying the essence of EAN's network of passionate intervention epidemiologists."



---

### Liza Coyer, Mentee

"I'm a recent EPIET graduate who was placed at the Bavarian Health and Food Safety Authority in Munich. Before joining EPIET, I worked as a researcher/epidemiologist on various HIV/STI prevention and COVID-19 studies in the Netherlands, as well as hepatitis C test and treatment projects in Cameroon. So far, I have had a very positive experience with the EAN



mentor's part (she's great!). I took a break from work to travel, and during that time, epidemiology wasn't my focus (yes, it can happen!). As a result, we've only met once. During our first meeting, my mentor was a thoughtful listener and offered valuable insights into her organization's structure, along with some great reads on life design and career development. Now that I am back on the job hunt, I will definitely reach out to her again! I believe this mentorship program is a fantastic initiative to gain insights from someone else's experiences and perspective, learn more about yourself, and define and achieve career goals."

---

## EAN welcomes the new ECDC-based coordinators !

---



**Anna Machowska** is a global public health expert with professional experience in leading and managing international, multidisciplinary, and multi-stakeholder projects. She is currently working in the Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-Associated Infections Section at ECDC and serves as an Associate Professor in Global Health at Karolinska Institutet. Anna obtained her PhD in medicine from Karolinska Institutet, with her research focusing on clinical epidemiology. She has a strong background in teaching and supervising students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and she has authored over 30 scientific publications.

---

**Tanja Charles** is an epidemiologist and public health professional with a background in critical care nursing and with field experience through projects with MSF in several countries. She has worked in surveillance and research in the Department of infectious diseases at the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and has been a Scientific Coordinator in the ECDC Fellowship Programme and the German Postgraduate Training for Applied Epidemiology (PAE) since 2020.

---

## Ioana Smith with the UK Public Health Rapid Support team

### Epidemiological support for a yellow fever outbreak, South Sudan, February-March 2024

The opportunity to apply to be deployed to South Sudan to assist with a yellow fever outbreak popped into my emails whilst I was on holiday celebrating a friends' 30th. I applied, as I had for practically every deployment opportunity that came my way (you've got to build up a thick skin for handling rejection) and then moseyed back to the birthday revelry. When back at home, knee deep in FETP projects, I received the message that I was actually **going** to be deployed to South Sudan. I was stunned and moments later mildly panicked. How safe was South Sudan? Would/could I be useful? And when truly hitting panic stations – was there any way I could possibly make it worse? After multiple cups of tea, I was calmed.



I was additionally placated when I found out that I was going to be joined by a senior epidemiologist, Tina Sorensen, a field epidemiologist with the UK Public Health Rapid Support team, so I would not be flying solo. Pre-departure **a lot** of paperwork comes your way, including security briefing, hours of mandatory training and reading materials. I was most

bemused when completing my 'proof of life' questions, which are used in the incredibly unlikely scenario that you get kidnapped and someone needs to verify your identity, and testing them out on my partner (who thankfully got all the answers right). But it was strange reading extensively about South Sudan, its recent history and the security context and building this picture of a very scary place to be and contrasting this to people's lived experience working and living there. With this mind, the **best** preparatory step I took for myself, was calling **everyone** I knew who had worked or lived in South Sudan. This really changed my expectations of South Sudan and was instrumental in me feeling comfortable about going.



Arriving in South Sudan, you are instantly aware that you are in a new context. First things first, it was 38 degrees, as a British bean, this was toasty and not my natural habitat. It was a surreal experience but thankfully we were given the weekend to acclimatise and then headed to the WHO South Sudan country office first thing Monday morning. Part of this acclimatisation

included chilling out in our hotel (partly because we were not sure if we were allowed to leave it) and over subsequent weekends we frequented other hotels with pools, exhibit A to the right.

The first week was spent getting the lay of land, figuring out who was who and what we could do to help. The yellow fever outbreak had been declared in December 2023 and the outbreak response was in full swing by the time we arrived, with a vaccination campaign



the surveillance systems within South Sudan. This gave us a great understanding of the systems and complex information flows.



Next, we conducted interviews with key stakeholders involved in the outbreak and conducted a field visit. This visit involved travelling to the epicentre of the outbreak in a different state and getting there via a small twenty-seater propeller plane. When in Yambio, people were really generous with their time, and we felt like we got a good understanding of some of the challenges and lessons learnt from the outbreak response through our discussions. We're in the process of summarising these findings into a report and hope that the recommendations will help contribute to enhanced preparedness and help improve future outbreak response.

On a more personal note, whilst it was truly an incredible work experience, I found it very jarring being in the country and living life in a very segregated style. The personal liberty that I take for granted was curtailed due to the security context. We had an 8pm curfew and could not walk outside of the hotel/office. South Sudan is one of the poorest countries in the world, and as a woman, the fact that, had I been born in South Sudan, I would have a greater chance of dying in childbirth than finishing secondary school, I found truly chilling.



The context of the country of South Sudan is incredibly challenging. They have many concurrent infectious disease outbreaks, which would challenge any country's health system. High rates of malnutrition and famine and are on the receiving end of spill over effects from the ongoing crisis in Sudan. As a result, I find myself conflicted. I had an incredible time; I learnt a huge amount and was touched by colleagues' kindness and generosity. However, challenges remain. South Sudan is and will continue to be a difficult context to work in especially with overdue elections due to be held in November and whispers of the conflict restarting. I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to deploy during my fellowship and am enormously thankful to Tina for being there with me. I am also very thankful to everyone who enabled and supported me on the deployment specifically, FETP (shout out to Alison Sykes) and UK-PHRST colleagues (Sam Moreton and Eno Umoh). It wasn't what I thought it was going to be, but it was one hell of an experience and one I would hugely recommend.

---

---

## connected!

---

### Do what you love to do!

You'd like to get active on a project for our community? An experience you'd like to share or a topic you'd like to educate on? Please reach out to us at [eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com) if you'd like to discuss your idea and want our support. We are available to help you bringing your ideas come to life.

---

### Support us with mini-assignments

Our community lives from all of us and the capacities of the board alone are limited. Every now and then, we may reach out to ask for your help on specific tasks or activities to get the best out of it for all of us.

---

### Activate your membership

Many benefits are lined up for active members of the network (GOARN requests of assistance, bulletins, discounts on mini-modules, access to specific resources on our website...).

Membership runs from Nov. 1 until Oct 31 of the following year - but you can activate your membership at anytime! **The annual membership fee is now €30 / £28. There is a 10-year membership available at €250 / £230.**

Fellows in their first and second year of training are exempt from paying membership fees. We have added a new payment option for credit cards to make membership renewal a bit easier. To use this option, please go to our website and follow the instructions there.

The details for how to transfer fees by online banking are also on the [EAN webpage](#); if you require any further information on membership payment, we kindly ask you to contact the EAN board ([eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com)), putting "membership payment" in the subject line.

Please indicate your name and membership year as reference in the bank transfer and also send an email to [eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com) with a copy of the receipt/invoice to inform us about your payment (sometimes names are not correctly transmitted with the transfer). Thank you for your support!

**Bank:** TransferWise Europe SA

**Bank address:** Avenue Louise 54, Room S52, Brussels  
1050, BE

**Account Holder:** E.A.N. (EPIET Alumni Network)

**IBAN:** BE88 9670 3610 1241

**BIC/Swift:** TRWIBEB1

#### **GBP ACCOUNT (£28 per annum)**

**Bank:** TransferWise

**Address:** 56 Shoreditch High Street, London E16JJ, UK

**Account holder:** E.A.N. (EPIET Alumni Network)

**IBAN:** GB22 TRWI 2314 7095 5404 40

**Account Number:** 95540440

**Sort code:** 23-14-70

**Update your membership**

[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[LinkedIn](#)[Website](#)[Email](#)[Instagram](#)

*Copyright © 2022, EPIET Alumni Network, All rights reserved.*

Our mailing address is:

[eanboard@gmail.com](mailto:eanboard@gmail.com)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

[View this email in your browser](#)

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

EPIET Alumni Network · 14, rue du val d'Osne · Saint-Maurice 94415 · France

