

*Public lecture 'Maternal Mental Health and Child Outcomes: insights from longitudinal research in Ethiopia' by prof. dr. Habtamu Mekonnen and discussant prof. dr. Ines Keygnaert*

Globally, in most settings, mothers are the primary socializing agent of their children and laying the foundations for their future development. However, maternal mental health interferes with this terrific role of the mother. Women of childbearing age are at increased risk of common mental disorders (CMD), mainly depression, with an estimated prevalence of 13% in high-income countries (HICs) and 19.8% in low- and middle-income (LMICs) countries. Risk factors for maternal CMD not only but include low socioeconomic status, poor social support, substance abuse, stressful life events, marital or intimate partner conflict, infant characteristics, natural and manmade disasters. The negative impact of maternal CMD goes beyond affecting all aspects of a woman's life and touches the whole family, her work, friendships, and can even lead to suicide in extreme cases. On top of the adverse effect on the individual woman's life, maternal CMD has been found to affect her interaction with her children inflicting upon their development and education. Children are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of maternal CMD due to their dependence on their caregiver for both their physical and psychological needs. A child's early environment, including nurturing relationships (with primary caregivers, mostly the mother) and responsive human interactions, plays a critical role in learning and in the development of secure attachment, which provides the blueprint for future relationships and mental well-being of the child. Therefore, intense research is needed to develop advocacy and intervention for maternal mental health to enhance healthy and holistic child development.

### Program

10:00-10:05	Introduction by PhD candidate Dereje Regasa
10:05-10:50	Lecture by prof. dr. Habtamu Mekonnen
10:50-11:05	Reflection by discussant, prof. dr. Ines Keygnaert
11:05- 11:30	Q&A

### Practical information

Date and time	22 <sup>nd</sup> of November, 2023 from 10:00-11:30
Location	Ghent University, Campus Dunant, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, leslokaal 1.3 (first floor), Online through Teams (link will be provided to those registered – lecture and reflection discussant will be streamed)
Registration	<a href="https://event.ugent.be/registration/maternalhealthchildoutcomes">https://event.ugent.be/registration/maternalhealthchildoutcomes</a> (participation for free, registration mandatory)

## Speaker



Prof. dr. Habtamu is a mental health epidemiologist and an expert of child development at Jimma University, Ethiopia. Beyond the academic engagement in the university where he supervises PhD and master students, he has contributed to a child development related national agenda and he is a founding member and secretariat committee of Ethiopian Early Childhood Network (EECN). His research interests include maternal mental health and child educational outcomes, displacement, trauma healing among people affected by conflict and mental health psychosocial support for internally displaced persons (IDPs). He applies advanced methodological designs and has a wealth of experience in leading multi-site studies including cohort study, large-scale surveys and working with the community at the grass root level. Currently, he is leading a project on trauma healing in the context of conflict, displacement, and climate change.

## Discussant



Prof. dr. Keygnaert is associate professor in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and co- director of the International Centre for Reproductive Health at the Department of Public Health and Primary Care of the Ghent University in Belgium. She is also founding member of the Academic Network for Research on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Policy (ANSER), the Centre for Social Studies on Migration and Refugees (CESSMIR) and the Human Rights Research Network (HRRN). Ines is involved in a myriad of (inter)national research projects on holistic care for victims of violence, on sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response, on sexual and reproductive health promotion in migrants and acceptability of care in vulnerable and minority groups. She developed clinical guidelines, violence prevention and migrant SRH promotion tools and training programs for many different settings and regularly provides consultancies for UN organisations and several governments. She teaches on migrant maternal health and reproductive justice, trauma and violence and recently co-authored a paper on gender-based violence upon climate change in The Lancet. Planetary Health.

## Organisers

Ghent University: Centre for the Social Study of Migration and Refugees (CESSMIR), Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy, Africa Platform (GAP), International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH), Academic Network for Research on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Policy (ANSER), CliMigHealth, PSYNC & UNU-CRIS

