The Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) initiative was established in 2010 by the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) Antwerp, in response to the underwhelming presence of health experts from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in global discourses about health systems strengthening. With a view to promoting the participation of young health professionals and researchers from these areas, the specific objectives included:

- ‘to facilitate participation in a public conference;
- to introduce and advance content knowledge about global health governance, health systems research and other related topics; and
- to enhance writing skills towards publication (peer-reviewed publications, social media, blogs…).’ (ITM Brochure, 2012).

The Emerging Voices programme - organised into pre-conference, during, and post-conference phases – was held for the first time in 2010, alongside the First Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Montreux – and again alongside the Second Global Symposium in Beijing in October/November 2012.

In Beijing, there were 50 health professionals and researchers from over 30 LMICs. With the call for participation attracting over 350 applicants vying for a place, I was extremely happy to make the final cut – and what a wonderful opportunity it was!

The programme addressed various themes: methods for health systems strengthening (HSS); innovation for HSS; universal health coverage; neglected priorities; and BRICS. Given the programme and research work in which I am currently engaged, the ‘methods’ and ‘innovations’ themes were most appealing to me.

I particularly enjoyed the face-to-face sessions on substantive issues focusing on health systems research which gave me the chance to engage with young and senior voices. I was also introduced to innovative approaches for preparing and delivering presentations which will be useful for some of the work we do at the School of Public Health (SOPH). Through oral and poster presentations I was able to share the experiences of the SOPH in implementing a multi-country capacity development intervention in the area of human resource for health (see page 10), describing how complex the intervention process has been and the strategies we are employing to navigate these challenges.
I feel the Emerging Voices 2012 track was a great success. Following the support participants received during the programme, they were able to make meaningful and visible contributions in the Global Symposium itself. In addition, Emerging Voices seems to be inspiring and reinvigorating similar initiatives in the sector which I hope grow stronger and that Emerging Voices continues to realise its noble ambitions.

Last but not least, as a first time visitor, I enjoyed my time in China. I have always been fascinated by the country: its unparalleled economic growth; its unique ways of coping with the needs of a massive population; its readiness to, and pride in seeking local solutions; and the vision and pragmatism of its leadership. My visit to a well-managed and highly-recognised Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital proved a very good case in point.

I would like to thank the SOPH at UWC and the ITM for these opportunities!

SECOND GLOBAL SYMPOSIUM ON HEALTH SYSTEMS RESEARCH
Beijing, 31 October - 3 November 2012

In November 2010, 1,400 researchers, policy makers, funders, and other stakeholders from around the world met in Montreux, Switzerland to share evidence, identify significant knowledge gaps, and set a research agenda that reflected the needs of low- and middle-income countries, particularly regarding universal health coverage. They also agreed on the need for ongoing symposia on this topic.

A second meeting was held in Beijing in November 2012, attended by about 1,800 participants. The objectives were to
- share new state-of-the-art evidence on universal health coverage;
- review the progress and challenges towards implementation of the global agenda of priority research on accelerating progress towards universal health coverage, including progress since the World Health Report of 2010;
- facilitate greater research collaboration and learning communities across disciplines, sectors, initiatives and countries; and
- identify and discuss the approaches to strengthening the scientific rigour of health systems research including concepts, frameworks, measures and methods.

The second symposium also saw the launch of Health Systems Global, a society which aims to bring together researchers, decision makers and implementers and to promote health systems research and knowledge translation through catalysing research (http://www.healthsystemsglobal.org/).

There was a strong presence of SOPH staff in both Montreux and Beijing and we played an active role in both symposia.

THIRD GLOBAL SYMPOSIUM ON HEALTH SYSTEMS RESEARCH
Cape Town, 30 September to 3 October 2014

Together with the universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, the Health Systems Trust and the Medical Research Council (MRC), the SOPH bid successfully to host the third symposium in Cape Town in 2014. This will be the first global symposium on health systems research to be held on the African continent.