I
n 2004 I visited central Asia for the first time. I was speaking at a WHO Making Pregnancy Safer workshop in Kyrgyzstan attended by delegations from the newly independent central Asian republics. Seven years later I was guest editor of Entre Nous No. 74, which described how the work that started there beside Lake Issyk-Kul was beginning to change childbirth in Kazakhstan. During the intervening years I made many visits to former Soviet countries and learned a lot. I discovered how the old system had perpetuated dangerously out-of-date maternity care. More importantly, I began to understand what it takes to bring about change.

Change requires action at all levels, from government ministries to local communities. My job was to convince doctors about the usefulness of confidential enquiries. These audits, which have been running in the United Kingdom for 60 years, involve honest appraisal of the problems revealed by maternal deaths and, more recently, “near misses”. I soon discovered that the idea of telling the truth to an official enquiry was alien to doctors about the usefulness of confidential enquiries. These audits, which have been running in the United Kingdom for 60 years, involve honest appraisal of the problems revealed by maternal deaths and, more recently, “near misses”. I soon discovered that the idea of telling the truth to an official enquiry was alien to doctors, unless attention is drawn to them. Achieving change needs emotional input, which was provided by the midwives’ perceptions at the end of Issue 74. I doubt if that important article would have been accepted by a scientific journal.

Increasingly we are all relying on the Internet to disseminate information and some people believe it will make journals redundant. I disagree. The Internet helps like-minded professionals to interact but is poor at promoting engagement between disciplines. Many authors need the discreet help of an editor to make their articles clear and a designer to make their articles clear. For 35 years Entre Nous has been fulfilling these functions in sexual and reproductive health, a field which continues to produce unexpected challenges. I’m disappointed that Entre Nous is to cease publication and I believe it will be missed. How long will it be before it is reborn?

James Drife – Guest Editor Issue No. 74

Like everybody else who has been involved in the production of, or contributed to, Entre Nous over the years, I am saddened by the passing of what has developed into an iconic publication on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in Europe – and by extension, the world.

My appointment as editor in 1994 was unusual, as I don’t have a public health background and was then editor of a few international magazines. The department, led by Dr Mark Tschechkowski, wanted to respond to the increasing demand for quality information in the SRH field, especially from the newly independent states and felt it was time for Entre Nous to transform from a newsletter to a free standing magazine. I was brought in as a professional to help make this transition and also to provide a fresh perspective on issues that were becoming increasingly contentious worldwide.

I had a desk in the maws of the ‘chocolate box’, working under the direct supervision of Dr Assia Brandrup-Lukanow, then the WHO EURO Regional Adviser.
for Sexuality and Family Planning, and more than ably assisted by Dominique Gundelach. I called them the ‘dynamic duo’. Their enthusiasm, wide-ranging knowledge and passion for the subject was infectious and I soon found myself immersed in the highways and byways of this fascinating issue.

Looking back, it was a different world then. Those were still very early days of the Internet and most people relied on information from publications and the media. Although some of us did not realize it then, we were on the cusp of some revolutionary and highly controversial changes of attitude towards sexuality, gender equality and family planning. Old, established concepts were about to be given a rude shaking up. Change on this scale invited the inevitable clash of ideas and cultures.

My time at Entre Nous coincided with two seminal events – one was the ICPD conference in Cairo and the other was the invention of RU 486, which revolutionized abortion care and had the potential to turn what had generally been a dangerous, often illegal operation into a safer procedure.

The implications were enormous and went well beyond abortion per se. Implicit in this was a massive cultural change in terms of gender equality and the rights of women. It went against the grain of some established religious, cultural and social norms. ICPD, in turn ruffled feathers further by placing human sexuality beyond the realm primarily of reproduction.

We covered both issues in the editions I edited. As part of a UN organization, we had to tread warily but with some staunch support from the top management, including from Regional Director Dr Jo Asvall, who was not averse to pushing through politically difficult public health issues, we pulled it off.

I left soon after to return to my main occupation covering development matters, but was gratified to learn that Entre Nous, translated into several European languages, had gone from strength to strength and was eagerly received even in many countries beyond the European Region including the Spanish, Portuguese and French speaking countries of Africa and Latin America.

In conclusion, I found my brief time at Entre Nous both exhilarating and fulfilling and was convinced that in some way at least, it had helped bring about the vast cultural change in gender relations we now take for granted.

Anver Versi
Editor 1994

In early 1998 just as I was leaving for Mexico to work as a volunteer for 6 months, I got a call: I was accepted to be the new editor of Entre Nous magazine. With an agreement that I was initially able to work from abroad, I set out to learn everything I could about the topic of the then upcoming issue: emergency contraception. During my tenure, the field of sexual and reproductive health would go on to change greatly. We revisited the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in a special issue in 1999 and again in 2004, a decade after it was signed. We saw a massive focus on HIV treatment from 2004 as part of the 3 by 5 Initiative and ultimately that scale up, and the systemic problems that the field of HIV still faced, is what led me to concentrate fully on HIV and AIDS during my remaining five years at the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

In the race to combat stigma and discrimination and empower key populations, like people who inject drugs and men who have sex with men, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) became overshadowed, in both global interest and in terms of allotted funding. Recently, it has been with great excitement and fascination that I see the issue returning to the forefront of European health research in my current work. With a majority of people living with HIV in Europe soon to be virally suppressed, new questions have emerged. What about their quality of life? Shouldn’t they be supported in having sero-discordant relationships and even having children, given the negligible risk of HIV transmission among those adhering to antiretroviral therapy? This new quality of life frontier is in fact anchored in SRH and is now being revived thanks to the success of interventions to prevent and treat HIV.

Another issue that emerged while I was at the WHO Regional Office for Europe was co-infection with HCV, in particular hepatitis C. While people living with HIV could be saved from dying from AIDS itself, their livers were suffering and eventually many would go on to die from liver complications. With the advent of highly effective direct acting antivirals to cure HCV, its elimination as a public health challenge is now within sight. This has become another focus of my work today.
10 years after leaving *Entre Nous*.
From before I joined as editor, right up to this last issue, *Entre Nous* has been the voice of cutting-edge viewpoints and original research on SRH and rights. It will be sorely missed, which is something that I fear will not be well recognized until the next time we are searching article databases looking for a European perspective on one of the many issues encompassed by SRH and rights.

In closing, I have to warmly thank the two chief editors I served under: Dr Gunta Lazdane and Dr Assia Brandrup-Lukanow for their leadership and support, as well as Thomas Warming, who colourfully illustrated many issues of *Entre Nous*.

**Jeffrey Lazarus**
- Editor 1998-2005

I t was both a pleasure and an eye-opener for me becoming the Editor of *Entre Nous*. It was with awe that I took over from Jeffrey Lazarus in 2005.

During my time, I dealt with topics of violence against women, the importance of working in partnerships, low fertility and cervical cancer in the European Region. Although I was well aware that the Region faced sexual and reproductive health and rights challenges, working as an editor for *Entre Nous* made me realize that despite the large public health challenges developing countries face, the European Region has lots to tackle in its own backyard.

Ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights for the world’s population has for many years proven to be a minefield. Access to contraception, comprehensive sexuality education and safe abortion are by many countries seen as highly controversial issues. Unholy alliances have been formed over the years to systematically prevent progress in the implementation of the 1994 ICPD Plan of Action. The more progressive countries outside of the European Region have always looked to the European Union (EU) Member States to take the lead in international UN negotiations to secure that the sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda was moved forward.

This expectation remains true until this day and to a large extent rightly so however, with the enlargement of the EU in 2004 this became more challenging, as more conservative and Catholic states entered the Union.

Dealing with European issues as an editor of *Entre Nous*, made me very conscious that working with governments in progressive countries and the EU-system at large, to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights, is critical in holding fort against more conservative voices in our own Region. Without strong political support and EU consensus on issues related to sexual and reproductive health, not only do our own fellow European citizens – both women and men – suffer from rights violations in relation to e.g. right to safe abortion or same sex relationships, but it also weakens the EU position in key negotiations internationally.

**Jacqueline Bryld**
- Editor 2005-2007

The European sexual and reproductive health community therefore must continue to work hard to hold our governments to account on key sexual and reproductive health and rights commitments and particularly support colleagues in the Region that are faced with stronger political opposition. As the very recent situation in Poland has shown us, there are strong forces that vigilantly oppose the idea of women’s access to safe abortions but it has also shown that when our community stands strong and when we raise our voices, damage can be avoided. Despite the ICPD being more than 20 years old, the battle continues. There is no time for complacency – not in Europe, not anywhere.

*Entre Nous* has made important contributions to the European sexual and reproductive health debate over the years. Hopefully, despite this being the last issue of *Entre Nous*, other good platforms for sharing of European perspectives on sexual and reproductive health and rights will remain active – this is clearly needed!
I remember vividly both the excitement and anxiety I felt as I assumed the role of editor of Entret Nous from Jacqueline Bryld in 2007; excitement over the opportunity to be part of Entret Nous and anxiety about ensuring that the issues would continue to be of the same high calibre and relevance as previous editions. Thankfully, the anxiety resolved after my first issue as editor and what remained was the pleasure and, yes, continued excitement of being able to work with a remarkable team of individuals who were dedicated to championing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and rights in the European Region, as well as globally.

My time at Entret Nous also coincided with a renewed commitment to and focus on SRH, particularly maternal, newborn and child health, by global development bodies, UN agencies, civil society and governments. This was an exciting time to be editor. Events such as the countdown to the completion of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals allowed us to critically assess and evaluate what progress had been made in the area of SRH and rights and, more importantly, what challenges remained. The Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals emphasized that in order to attain the highest attainable standard of health for all, including SRH, we needed to do things differently from previous approaches. This was reflected in later issues of the magazine that moved beyond specific topics in the field of SRH to a broader, more holistic development agenda and public health approach to SRH that focused on overarching principles such as human rights, equality and equity, sustainability and intersectionality.

Now, as I write these words for the final issue of Entret Nous I do so with both a sadness and fondness present. Sadness to say farewell to a magazine that has, over its lifetime, made a remarkable contribution to the field of SRH and rights in the European Region, and fondness for precisely the same reason. It has truly been a remarkable experience to have been the editor of a publication that has always been willing to prioritize and advocate for the pressing issues in SRH and rights, recognizing the importance of ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized populations, controversial subjects, sharing of successes and challenges and focusing on equity are essential to decreasing existing SRH inequities and the attainment of positive SRH, rights and well-being for all in the Region. It has not always been easy for the magazine to be the voice that brings awareness and attention to these critical issues; doing so has required diplomacy, commitment, flexibility and courage from all involved. I applaud all of the authors, editorial assistants, readers, publishers, colleagues and Editorial Advisory Board and WHO European Regional Advisory Panel on Research and Training in Reproductive Health members for supporting us with this task and allowing our work to remain relevant for so long.

Finally, my reflections on being editor of Entret Nous would not be complete without a few well deserved words of appreciation: to Dominique Gundelach, Jane Persson and Nathalie Germain Julskov, your dedication, attention to detail, sense of humour and professionalism were integral to the success of Entret Nous; to Tamar Khomasuridze and Rita Columbia, your thoughtful perspectives on SRH and suggestions for topics and authors kept the magazine fresh and current; to Maria Lundahl Assov, your creativity with layout and design meant each publication was easily readable and visually appealing; and to Gunta Lazdane, your mentorship, support and friendship inspired us all to ensure that every issue of Entret Nous was the very best it could be for the community of readers and contributors in Europe and beyond.

Lisa Avery
– Editor 2007-2016