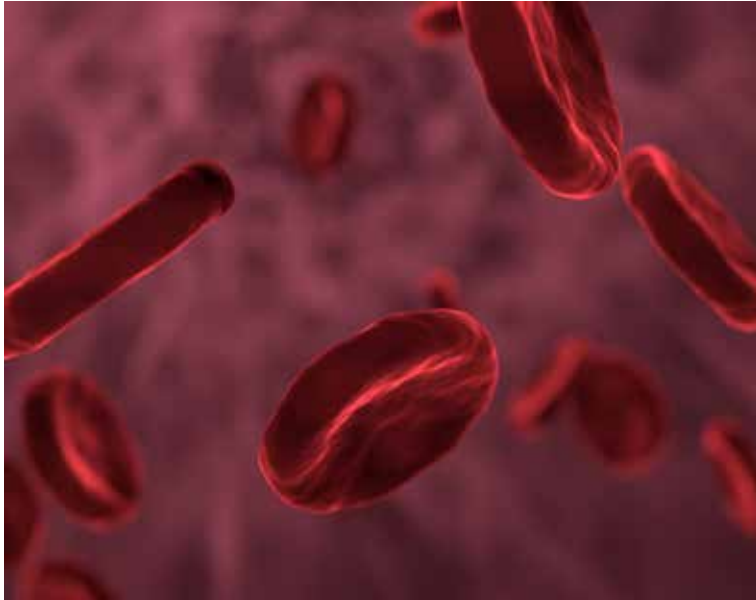


# Research Briefing

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## Narrating blood - the impact of hidden blood-related conditions

### CONTEXT

**Exploring the impact of hidden blood-related conditions on social, economic and health welfare in the UK, Bangladesh, India and Ghana**

Narrating Blood is an international network at the University of Sussex. Based in the Centre for Cultures of Reproduction, Technologies and Health ([CORTH](#)), it is a joint collaboration with the Sussex Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth ([CIRCY](#)) and the Institute for Development Studies ([IDS](#)). Led by CORTH Director Professor Maya Unnithan, CIRCY Director Professor Janet Boddy and IDS Senior Fellow Hayley MacGregor, this programme brings together international and national research expertise to establish a set of analytic and methodological instruments to address the social, economic and health burden of hidden blood-related conditions such as anaemia in lower and middle income countries. Our research will initially focus on Bangladesh, India, Ghana and the UK.

### Key themes

Narrating Blood examines the ways in which blood is narrated within policy discourse, as well as perceived in terms of weakness or stigma in everyday family, school and livelihood contexts for poor, rural, urban and migrating populations. Our network will explore the following topic areas:

- Blood related stigma
- Blood borne infections (HIV and Aids, Malaria, Zika, Ebola)
- Anaemia (nutritional; thalassaemia; sickle cell anaemia; malarial anaemia)
- Menstrual disorders
- Blood diagnostics and related technologies
- Blood transfusions
- Blood donations
- Blood, kinship, inheritance
- Blood and identity politics

### Network objectives

One of the key global challenges for health and education, anaemia and blood related health and psychosocial conditions require a transdisciplinary approach (bringing together interdisciplinary perspectives in new ways). Accordingly, the objectives of the network are as follows:

- Pool expertise around the less-visible, non-communicable blood-related disorders especially anaemia and menstrual health focusing on young women, men, adolescent girls and boys
- Develop effective health communication methodologies for an engagement with behavioural change of close-to-community providers (i.e., midwives and informal health workers) that draw on anthropology, psychology, philosophy, education, social policy and social care perspectives
- Share knowledge and advise on culturally sensitive policy related interventions related to reproductive health issues in low and middle-income countries

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## NARRATING BLOOD



Photo credit: Elliot Jebreel

### Engagement and Impact

Blood-related disorders such as anaemia are of key current policy concerns because they are complex health issues. Anaemia is often 'hidden' from the view of both those who suffer from it as well as those who treat it. One of the key approaches identified has been a transdisciplinary and problem-solving approach for such complex health issues. The Narrating Blood programme enables us to bring together social scientists with medical scientists, haematologists, immunologists, policy makers and members of civil society organisations to systematically pool together the expertise at Sussex, along with the expertise of international institutions to help address these issues.

By integrating community beliefs around our topic areas, we aim to help policy-makers curate locally-contextualised and programmatic approaches to address the realities of blood-related reproductive and adolescent health issues.

### Recent activities

CORTH and CIRCY research centres hosted the first meeting of the Narrating Blood International Network from 25-29 June 2018 at the University of Sussex. Global and UK partners gathered for a week to share knowledge on research topics and methods, brainstorming across their disciplines and engaging with cross-cultural issues. Blood was approached contextually from metaphorical, discursive, material and biomedical standpoints. At the end of the week, concrete plans emerged on how to expand the network sustainably through the next phase of the grant period, until 2020. In the coming year, members will also meet internationally in the 'BIG' countries (Bangladesh, India and Ghana) at host institutions to develop outputs. Input to the discussion and overall organisation was made by CORTH members Miranda Marks, Dr Ben Kasstan and Dr Bronwyn Gillespie. Their contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

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### GLOBAL PARTNERS & UK PARTNERS

**Mr Daniel Amoako-Sakyi** - Department of Microbiology and Immunology, University of Cape Coast (Ghana)

**Dr Sangeeta Chattoo** - Department of Health Sciences, University of York (UK)

**Professor Sabina Faiz Rashid** - James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University (Bangladesh)

**Professor Kate Hampshire** - Department of Anthropology, Durham University (UK)

**Dr Simon Mariwah** - Department of Geography and Regional Planning, University of Cape Coast (Ghana)

**Ms Chhaya Pachauli** - Prayas, Rajasthan (India)

**Professor Shobhita Rajagopal** - Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur (India)

**Professor Sally Theobald** - Department of International Public Health, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (UK)

**Professor Uma Vennam** - Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalam (Women's University), Tirupati (India)

#### Associated Sussex Faculty

**Dr Paul Boyce** - Anthropology and International Development, University of Sussex

**Dr Tam Cane** - Department of Social Work and Social Care, University of Sussex

**Dr Shahaduz Zaman** - Department of Global Health and Infection, University of Sussex



Global and UK partners

### CONTACTS

To get involved in our research contact:

#### Narrating Blood Directors:

Professor Maya Unnithan  
[m.unnithan@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:m.unnithan@sussex.ac.uk)

#### Network Coordinator

Nathali Arias  
[n.e.arias@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:n.e.arias@sussex.ac.uk)

Professor Janet Boddy  
[j.m.boddy@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.boddy@sussex.ac.uk)

Dr Hayley Macgregor  
[H.Macgregor@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:H.Macgregor@sussex.ac.uk)

### FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

For further information about Narrating Blood please visit:  
[http://www.sussex.ac.uk/corth/research/narrating\\_blood](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/corth/research/narrating_blood)

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