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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH
AND DEVELOPMENT

Institute for Global Health and Development

Newsletter | Third Edition, April – June 2022



Message from the Director

I am thrilled to share remarkable strides of the team during the second quarter of 2022.

One of our flagship initiatives '***Supporting Women in Science***' was launched successfully. It is a significant step towards our commitment to advance women's scholarship in science and academics. There is a growing need to bridge gender gaps in scientific leadership if meaningful and sustainable progress is to be made in global health. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Institute will continue to advance gender equality through similar projects in the geographies that we serve.

This issue will serve you information on the Institute's promising work targeting health and development in low- and middle-income countries, and our valued collaborations with academicians and institutions.

We welcome your feedback and potential contributions, and hope that you will find the content of this edition informative and engaging.

Dr Zulfiqar A Bhutta

Distinguished University Professor & Founding Director

Research Highlights



Supporting Women in Science

A research capacity building programme

Supporting Women in Science

There is overwhelming evidence that research in health capacity development and health service delivery receives low priority in most low- and middle-income countries. To make it even more challenging, there are substantial gender differentials in research capacity and output.

'*Supporting Women in Science*' sets out to change this. It is designed to advance women's scholarship in science and academia in the geographies we serve. For details, click [here](#).



Polio Eradication in High-risk and Conflict Settings of Pakistan

In April 2022, after 15 months of zero reported cases, two cases reemerged in North Waziristan and caused a serious concern amongst policy makers and public health professionals. Pakistan's government reaffirmed its commitment to end Polio and announced vaccine campaigns with renewed rigor.

The project will facilitate the Government's efforts to reduce refusals, assess the feasibility of potential scale-up, and improve the

coverage of Polio vaccines in two super high-risk union councils: district Karachi-Sindh and district Bannu-KPK. For details, click [here](#).



Prevention and Management of Wasting

According to the Global Nutrition Report 2021, 45.4 million children under the age of 5 have been affected by wasting, while 13.6 million by severe wasting in 2020. Urgent and strategic interventions require curbing poor diet of mothers and children, making nutrition services and education more accessible, and taking impacts of COVID-19 into account.

This project will assess the effectiveness between population-based interventions and targeted population-based interventions for

wasting in infants and children up to five years of age. For details, click [here](#).



Research Training in Non-communicable Diseases

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are an extraordinary global crisis, especially in low- and middle-income countries. To bridge the response gap, the Aga Khan University has collaborated with Duke University to advance sustainable research capacity in NCDs through an initiative called 'The Aga Khan University Pakistan Initiative for Non-Communicable Diseases (AKUPI-NCDs)'.

This ambitious programme has multiple pathways, including opportunities for fully

funded PhD in NCDs, Masters in Data Science, and early-career launch, allowing select applicants to pursue their study programme while working as research instructors at AKU. For details, click [here](#).

Reflections from IGHD's Associate Faculty



Dr Sameen Siddiqi, Professor & Chair, Community Health Sciences

Are there still gender differences in your research environment?

We are delighted that most lead researchers in the department of Community Health Sciences (CHS) at AKU are women who are mobilizing high-impact research, building capacity in health research, and mentoring other junior faculty and students. Under the leadership of the Department's distinguished female faculty, CHS is World Health Organization's Collaborating Center for Sexual and Reproductive Health Research.

What are the current opportunities and challenges for women in science in low- and middle-income countries?

Women are increasingly playing a pivotal role in science in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and the opportunities abound. LMICs are a diverse group and not all countries have recognized the cardinal role of women in science. For instance, countries in south and southeast Asia where women are increasingly engaged in science, whether academic or applied disciplines, have demonstrated greater levels of economic growth, living standards, health and population outcomes, women's empowerment, and influence in decision making. Astute policies are needed to incentivize and recognize the impact of mainstreaming women in science.

How do you think society is implicated in gender parity?

Implicit in this question are the societal values in this part of the world. Having worked in and travelled to almost every country of the Middle East over two decades, there are indeed significant gender disparities in science and almost every walk of life in the region. In the health sector, the male to female ratio may not be as skewed based on the statistical measure of parity. However, there are huge gaps in terms of women's empowerment and representation in positions of authority and decision-making. Accepting these challenges as societal norms is no more an option; they must be confronted with commitment by investing in policies supporting women scientists getting employed and returning to workplace, mobilizing a network of female role models, and influencing the mindset of men scientists and administrators.



Dr Marleen Temmerman, Professor & Associate Director, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, AKU-East Africa

What are the current opportunities and challenges for women in science in East Africa?

Increasingly, opportunities are created for women interested in science and research, globally and in East-Africa. Girls are doing remarkably well in high school, grabbing opportunities for higher education, working hard, and performing well. This is surely the case for girls and women from upper- and middle-socioeconomic class. However, there are also many girls who do not reach their full potential because their families cannot afford higher education, and/or prefer to prioritize boys. This inequity calls for investment in all and leaving no one behind.

How do you see the research landscape in low- and middle-income countries evolving for women in the next ten years?

Women are still a minority in leadership positions, especially in academic and research settings. Universities should lead by example and facilitate careers of young women who carry the burden of household and caring for children and families. Thanks to the growing 'girl power', women will have a greater impact in the upcoming decades, in sciences and beyond.

What are priority areas for advancing women's scientific leadership in the developing world?

Priority areas depend on the priorities and needs of individual countries. In general, there must be investment in sciences, innovation and technology, green transition, education, health, and diplomacy. These are also the priorities of our AKU-UNESCO Chair investing in the next generation of Young Leaders.

Key Publications

The Lancet Series: Optimising Child and Adolescent Health and Development

With less than 10 years left to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we are concerned that once again, the world is failing its children. The COVID-19 pandemic, failure of the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference to rise to the aspirations of millions of children, and recent humanitarian disasters in Afghanistan, Tigray, Ethiopia, coupled with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have exposed millions of families and children to enormous additional physical and mental health risks. [Read more.](#)

Tackling Protein-calorie Malnutrition During World Crises

This review is mainly focused on the health and nutrition sectors and highlights the impact of COVID-19 on malnutrition, food systems, and industries. It also discusses the various measures implemented across the world to cater the burden of maternal and child malnutrition. [Read more.](#)

School-age Children and Adolescents Nutritional Survey, Sindh and Punjab

This survey brings forth nutritional information about an age group which has not been a major focus of global programmes in recent years. There is a dire need to work towards the healthy future of school-age children in our country as united and collaborative efforts have been few and far between. Read more in [Sindh's](#) and [Punjab's](#) reports.

For more publications of the Institute, click [here](#).

Webinars and Dialogues

Supporting Training & Development for Early-Career Women Scientists
A live webinar on the AKU-Oxford initiative
Tuesday, 21 June 2022

Speakers:
Dr. Zulfiqar A. Shatta, Institute for Global Health and Development and The Hospital Children
Dr. Stephen Kennedy, University of Oxford
Dr. Amira Abubakar, Aga Khan University, East Africa
Dr. Aqum Habi, Aga Khan University
Dr. Jil Das, Institute for Global Health and Development

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The Lancet Optimising Child and Adolescent Health and Development Series Launch
Thursday April 28, 2022 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm BST

With remarks from:
Dr. Catherine Russell, Executive Director, UNICEF
Dr. Federico Ghahraman, Deputy Director, WHO
Dr. Zulfiqar Shatta, Institute for Global Health and Development, AKU
Dr. Maureen Black, Professor, The Aga Khan University
Dr. Carl Anumba, Professor, The Aga Khan University

Presentations by lead authors:
Dr. Hester Black, Professor, Oxford
Dr. Cesar Vitoria, American Professor, Federal University of Pelotas (Brazil)
Tijl Valschaert, Clinical Research Fellow, Ghent University
Dr. Margaret Krish, Professor, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Panel discussion:
Moderated by Dr. Jonathan Cheah, Executive Editor of The Lancet
Dr. Yash Soodra, Professor, University of Warwick
Dr. Richard Hayman, Executive Chair, The Lancet
Dr. Jennifer Bryce, Senior Health Specialist, School of Public Health

Presented by: THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY, THE LANCET, SickKids | Center for Global Child Health

Supporting Women in Science

[Watch](#) the recording

The Lancet Series Launch

[Watch](#) the recording

Click [here](#) to explore all webinars and talks organized by the Institute.

Celebration



Dr Bhutta has been ranked amongst the top 100 medicine scientists by Research.com, one of the major knowledge centres for medicine research. Professor Bhutta is the only scientist from Pakistan and the low- and middle-income countries who made it to the top 100. Our heartiest congratulations to the Founding Director of IGHD. Read the complete news [here](#).

Collaborate With Us

The Institute invites expressions of interest from faculty members at AKU and other universities for cross appointment as associate faculty. Associate faculty appointments enable the Institute to align and augment the depth and breadth of expertise for research activities through agreements lasting for a specific length of time and with agreed terms of reference.

Internal appointments involve a nomination and vetting process, and must include the support of the Institute's Director and the Dean of the home entity at AKU. Cross appointments from external institutions are possible, with the process involving an assessment of potential conflict of interest and a commitment of adherence to AKU's Human Resources and other policies.

The Institute reviews all expressions of interest once every year. You may submit yours anytime [here](#).

We would like to hear from you. Share your comments and suggestions with us at ighd@aku.edu.