

**Aga Khan University- FHS-PhD Programme**  
**List of funded projects for potential PhD Candidates**

Population & Public Health Stream						
Sr. No.	Name, Email address and Department of Primary Supervisor	Supervisory Team	Title of Project/ Source of funding	Research Funding available	Funds available until	Key Objectives of research project
1	Dr Andrew Prendergast <a href="mailto:andrew.prendergast@aku.edu">andrew.prendergast@aku.edu</a> Visiting Faculty, Department of Peads	Drs Fyezah Jehan, Imran Nisar and Waqasuddin Khan	Nutritional support and prophylaxis of azithromycin for pregnant and lactating women to improve birth outcomes in peri-urban slums of Karachi, Pakistan (Mumta Pregnant Women and Lactating Women Trials)	USD 50,000	December 2026	The key objectives are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To investigate inflammatory biomarkers and immune dysregulation in malnourished mothers and their infants, examining their role in gut permeability, systemic inflammation, and growth outcomes.</li> <li>To characterize the relationship between malnutrition and infection by analyzing pathogen load, antimicrobial resistance patterns, and immune responses in pregnant and lactating women, and their infants.</li> <li>To explore disruptions in key nutrient absorption and metabolic pathways in malnutrition, assessing biomarkers of micronutrient status, intestinal function, and energy homeostasis</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pre-requisites of PhD candidate applicants (graduate qualification requirement):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Minimum two years relevant experience (Public Health)</b></li> <li>• <b>Strong background with hands-on research on topics related to epidemiology, biostatistics, biological systems, community health, nutrition</b></li> <li>• <b>Some experience in the following is preferred: stakeholder engagement, study design, data analysis, project management</b></li> </ul>						
2	Dr Zahra Hoodbhoy <a href="mailto:zahra.hoodbhoy@aku.edu">zahra.hoodbhoy@aku.edu</a> Associate Professor, Department of Peads	Drs Emily Smith, Imran Nisar and Fyezah Jehan	Pregnancy Risk, Infant Surveillance, and Measurement Alliance (PRISMA)	USD 10 million	Dec 2028	The key objectives are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To improve the global understanding of key risk factors or vulnerabilities for morbidity and mortality among pregnant women and mother-infant pairs during antenatal care and postnatal care (up to one year).</li> <li>To provide population-based baseline estimates of key maternal and child health outcomes. This may inform future interventions and randomized trial study designs.</li> <li>To collect data to enable the application of novel analytical techniques (i.e., machine learning) to create risk prediction tools.</li> </ul>

<b>Pre-requisites of PhD candidate applicants (graduate qualification requirement): Some experience of MNCH work would be helpful</b>						
3	Dr Zahid Memon <a href="mailto:zahid.memon@aku.edu">zahid.memon@aku.edu</a> Associate Professor & Sec Head, Department of CHS	Drs Zafar Fatmi, Bilal Usmani and Abdul Ghaffar	Enhancing Service Quality and Experience in Karachi SHRUCs	USD 2 million	December 2027	<p>The key objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that caregivers consistently experience positive, supportive, and trustworthy interactions at every point of contact with the health system by improving communication, empathy, and service responsiveness across community and facility levels.</li> <li>Enable and equip providers with the necessary resources, environment, and motivation to deliver high-quality, compassionate, and context-sensitive immunization services through capacity-building, supportive supervision, and performance-based incentives.</li> <li>Strengthen recognition and institutionalization of service quality and user experience as central pillars of immunization system performance among health system managers and decision-makers through policy integration, evidence translation, and leadership engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-requisites of PhD candidate applicants (graduate qualification requirement):</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Minimum two years relevant experience (Public Health)</b></li> <li><b>Demonstrated experience in implementation or health systems research, preferably in immunization, RMNCH, or community-based health programs.</b></li> <li><b>Familiarity with mixed-methods research, qualitative inquiry, and behavioral frameworks such as the WHO BeSD or COM-B.</b></li> <li><b>Skills in program evaluation, data analytics, or digital health platforms will be an advantage.</b></li> </ul>						
4	Dr Naghma Rizvi <a href="mailto:naghma.rizvi@aku.edu">naghma.rizvi@aku.edu</a> Assistant Professor, SONAM, PK	Drs Tazeen Ali and Zahra Tharani	Addressing Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence among University Students in Pakistan	USD 100,000	December 2027	<p>The key objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employ individual interviews to gather narrative data from participants to identify key themes related to facilitators and barriers related to the intervention.</li> <li>Use these insights to refine the intervention prior to an R01 proposal to ensure the intervention's sustainability and acceptability across diverse university settings in Pakistan.</li> <li>Some potential accomplishments of our project:</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-requisites of PhD candidate applicants (graduate qualification requirement): The applicant must have some exposure to:</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Gender studies</b></li> <li><b>Foundational understanding of Qualitative and/or quantitative research methods</b></li> <li><b>Technical and Digital Literacy</b></li> </ul>						

5	Dr Zafar Fatmi <a href="mailto:zafar.fatmi@aku.edu">zafar.fatmi@aku.edu</a> Professor, Department of CHS	Drs Zahid Memon, Bilal Usmani and Asaad Nafees	Developing Climate and Health Data Services	USD 540,000	December 2028	The proposed project will codesign data services, operationalizing via local technology partners, building local research and communication capacity, and ensuring sustainability.
<b>Pre-requisites of PhD candidate applicants (graduate qualification requirement): Masters in Public Health is a prerequisite</b>						
6	Dr Zafar Fatmi <a href="mailto:zafar.fatmi@aku.edu">zafar.fatmi@aku.edu</a> Professor, Department of CHS	Drs Asaad Nafees and Courtland Robinson	Reducing Prevalence of Forced Labor in the Brick-kiln Industry in Pakistan: An Intervention Evaluation	USD 500,000	June 2027	<p>The key objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen institutional accountability by activating and capacitating District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) to monitor bonded labor, child labor, and kiln compliance.</li> <li>• Enhance access to basic services through WASH improvements, non-formal education for children, and health awareness for women and workers.</li> <li>• Promote decent work and OSH by introducing safety measures, health check-ups, and awareness on respiratory and heat-related hazards.</li> <li>• Empower workers and families through registration, CNIC acquisition, access to social protection schemes, and legal support.</li> <li>• Promote environmental compliance and transition to cleaner kiln technologies (zigzag kilns, green practices) reducing emissions and heat stress.</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-requisites of PhD candidate applicants (graduate qualification requirement): Masters in Public Health is a prerequisite</b>						