THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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NEWSLETTER | ISSUE NO. 15

July – September 2026



HONOURS & RECOGNITION

DR JAI DAS AND DR BHUTTA RECOGNISED BY HEC AMONG DISTINGUISHED PAKISTANI RESEARCHERS AND SCIENTISTS

Dr Jai K. Das and Dr Zulfiqar A. Bhutta were recognised by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan, on July 22, 2026, among distinguished Pakistani researchers and scientists ranked in the top 2% globally.

The recognition acknowledged their global research influence and contributions to the advancement of knowledge. Their work has helped strengthen the evidence base for addressing national and global health challenges, particularly those affecting women, children, and vulnerable communities.

The honour reflects IGHD's contribution to research excellence, capacity building, and evidence-informed approaches to improving public health.

HONOURS & RECOGNITION

IGHD RESEARCHERS NAMED AMONG WORLD'S TOP 2% SCIENTISTS

IGHD's Founding Director, Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, and Associate Director, Dr. Jai K. Das, were recognised in the 2026 edition of the World's Top 2% Scientists list, compiled by Stanford University and Elsevier. IGHD Associate Faculty Dr. Zohra S. Lassi and Dr. Rehana A. Salam also featured in both the single-year and career-long impact rankings.

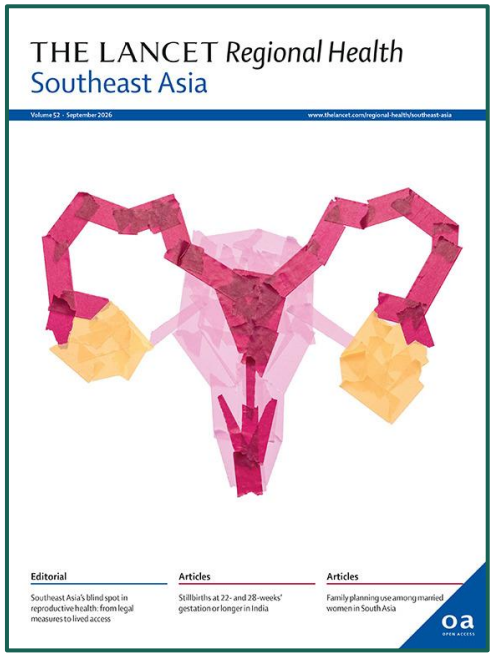
Dr. Bhutta led AKU's representation, ranking 251st worldwide for single-year impact and 421st for career-long impact. Previously recognised among the top 0.01% of the most highly cited scientists globally, his latest rankings underscore the sustained influence of his research. Dr. Das ranked 18,105th for single-year impact. Together, these researchers contributed to AKU's broader achievement, with 41 researchers, including 22 alumni, recognised this year, up from 28 in the previous edition.

Drawing on Elsevier's Scopus database, the rankings assess research citation impact through a composite indicator incorporating citations, h-index, co-authorship, and authorship position. Single-year rankings reflect recent research influence, while career-long rankings capture impact over time.

The recognition highlights the international contribution of IGHD's leadership and associated scholars to maternal and child health, nutrition, and global health, generating evidence that informs policy and practice in Pakistan and beyond.

RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

DR KANZA NAQVI CO-LEADS LANCET REGIONAL HEALTH REVIEW ON FAMILY PLANNING IN SOUTH ASIA



Dr Syeda Kanza Naqvi from IGHD is joint first author, alongside Laeba Hussain, of a systematic review and meta-analysis published in *The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia* on July 31, 2026. Dr Jai K. Das also contributed as a co-author.

Titled "Determinants of family planning use among married women of reproductive age in south Asia: a systematic review and meta-analysis," the paper reviewed 78 studies involving more than 2.2 million participants, with 70 studies included in the meta-analysis.

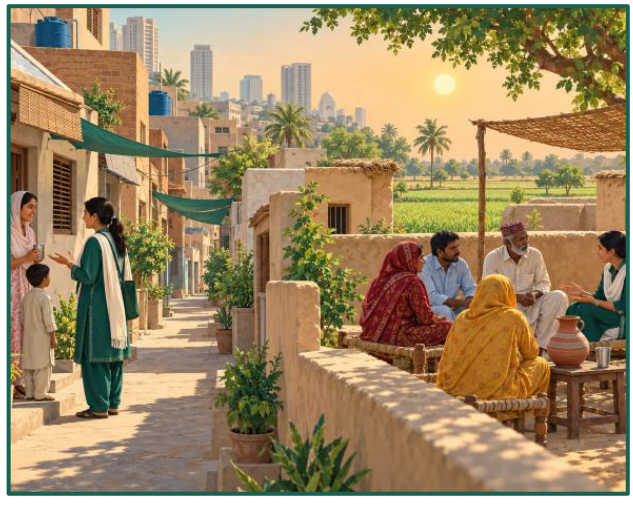
The findings showed that women's education and employment, spousal involvement in decision-making, access to family planning services, media exposure, and counselling from healthcare workers were associated with greater use of modern contraception. The authors cautioned that some estimates were based on limited studies.

The review highlights the need for coordinated approaches that strengthen women's decision-making power, engage partners, and improve access to reliable information and quality services to address inequalities in family planning across South Asia.

Click Here to Read the Publication

RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

SHAPES PROTOCOLS OUTLINE HEAT-ADAPTATION TRIALS IN URBAN AND RURAL PAKISTAN



Two study protocols developed by the SHAPES research team were published in BMJ Open in August 2026. The author teams include Dr. Jai K. Das, Dr. Syeda Kanza Naqvi, Arjumand Rizvi, Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, and collaborating researchers. The papers describe complementary trials evaluating structural heat adaptation and education in urban Karachi and rural Matiari, Sindh.

Each cluster-randomised trial will include 22 clusters allocated equally between intervention and control groups. Both will evaluate a Resilience and Heat Adaptation Bundle (ReHAB), combining community education with housing improvements such as roof and wall treatments, shading, improved ventilation, sustainable energy solutions, and shared shaded spaces.

Household surveys, environmental sensors, and wearable devices will assess indoor and outdoor heat conditions, individual exposure, health, quality of life, and physiological responses.

By studying the approach across two distinct settings, the trials aim to generate evidence on practical ways to reduce heat-related health risks and improve living conditions in vulnerable communities. The protocols establish the methods for evaluating these interventions; findings on their effectiveness will follow completion of the studies.

Click Here to Read the Urban Protocol **Click Here to Read the Rural Protocol**

RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

CoMIC FOLLOW-UP STUDY IN THE LANCET GLOBAL HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS LASTING BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR CHILD HEALTH



A follow-up study published in *The Lancet Global Health* examines whether improvements achieved through the Community Mobilisation and Community Incentivisation (CoMIC) trial were sustained three years after intervention activities ended.

Conducted in Tando Muhammad Khan, Sindh, the follow-up surveyed 5,658 children younger than five years from 3,906 households across 48 villages. Researchers found that 88% of the water and sanitation facilities constructed as community incentives remained functional, alongside 56% of village committees established in the mobilisation and incentivisation group.

Compared with the control group, communities that received mobilisation and collective incentives retained improvements in sanitation and a higher proportion of fully immunised children. However, there was no evidence of a difference in oral rehydration solution use in this group.

The findings suggest that community ownership and collectively selected incentives can help sustain improvements in child health practices and infrastructure beyond the lifetime of a project.

Click Here to Read the Publication

RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

SCANS STUDY IN LANCET SOUTHEAST ASIA REVEALS DOUBLE BURDEN OF MALNUTRITION AMONG CHILDREN AGED 5–9 YEARS

THE LANCET *Regional Health* Southeast Asia

A study by the SCANS research team, including Dr. Jai K. Das, Arjumand Rizvi, Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, and colleagues, has been published in The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia. Titled “Assessment of health and nutrition status among children aged 5–9 years in Pakistan: a cross-sectional survey (2020),” the study addresses an important evidence gap for an often-overlooked age group.

Click Here to Read the Publication

The survey assessed 5,952 children in Sindh and Punjab, collecting information on growth, haemoglobin levels, dietary diversity, food security, and household circumstances. Overall, 17.6% of children were underweight, 23.4% were stunted, 35.4% had anaemia, and 7.4% were overweight.

Nutritional outcomes varied by province and socioeconomic circumstances. Children in Punjab had lower odds of underweight, stunting, and anaemia than those in Sindh, while greater household wealth was associated with higher odds of obesity.

The findings highlight the need for targeted approaches addressing both undernutrition and excess weight, including school-based nutrition programmes, improved diets, and opportunities for physical activity.

17.6%	23.4%	35.4%	7.4%
UNDERWEIGHT	STUNTED	ANAEMIA	OVERWEIGHT

EVENTS & CONVENINGS

AKU PROVOST AND SONAM DEAN VISIT MATIARI RESEARCH SITE






Dr Tania Bubela, Provost and Vice President Academic, and Dr Salimah R. Walani, Dean, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Pakistan, visited IGHD's Matiari research site on August 21, 2026. Dr Asma Abdul Malik, Sana Khatoon and Muhammad Khan Jamali guided the visit, showcasing the implementation of the BIRTH Cohort and SHAPES projects alongside other ongoing research activities.

The BIRTH Cohort examines how extreme heat exposure affects maternal, fetal, and newborn health, combining pregnancy follow-up with environmental monitoring, clinical assessments, and biological measurements. The SHAPES project evaluates structural housing improvements and community education to reduce heat-related health risks in vulnerable communities.

The visit provided an opportunity for AKU leadership to see how these studies are being implemented in the field and to learn about IGHD's work connecting climate research with maternal and child health and community resilience in rural Sindh.

EVENTS & CONVENINGS

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN DELEGATION EXPLORES RESEARCH COLLABORATION WITH IGHD AND AKDN PARTNERS






IGHD hosted a delegation from the University of Michigan's Center for Global Health Equity comprising Dr Akbar Waljee, Prof Bilal Butt, and Dr Ellen Meader for engagements in Pakistan during September 2026. Dr Jai Das, Dr Khadija Vadsaria, and Dr Asma Abdul Malik represented IGHD in discussions on research collaboration, joint funding, and capacity building.

Activities began on September 4 in Islamabad with an Aga Khan Foundation-hosted meeting involving AKAH, AKRSP, and the Aga Khan Health Service, Pakistan. Discussions explored climate-related health risks, community resilience, and opportunities for collaborative training. From September 5–8, the delegation visited Karakoram International University and met AKRSP and AKAH teams in Gilgit and Hunza to learn about regional research, community development, and disaster-resilience initiatives.

On September 12, the visitors toured IGHD's research facilities and field sites in Matiari, learning about the BIRTH Cohort and SHAPES study.

The visit identified opportunities for monthly joint seminars, collaborative grant applications, postdoctoral and staff exchanges, shared climate-health courses, and data and geospatial collaboration.

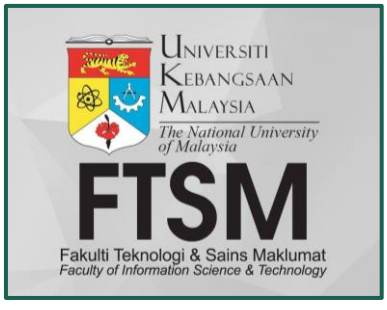
EVENTS & CONVENINGS

IGHD REPRESENTED AT CLIMATE MITIGATION AND HEALTH COHORT CONVENING IN MALAYSIA

Dr. Jai K. Das, representing IGHD, along with Mr. Asif Ullah Khan, Secretary of Health, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Dr. Zubair Khalid from LUMS, participated as delegates from Pakistan in the “Advancing Climate Mitigation Solutions in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) Cohort Convening,” held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from August 26–28, 2026.

The three-day gathering brought together research teams and experts working at the intersection of climate mitigation and public health, with support from the Faculty of Science and Technology at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Discussions explored how strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can also deliver health benefits, while considering their social and economic implications for communities in LMICs.

Key areas of focus included energy transitions, transport, housing, and food systems, alongside approaches to connecting research with policy and implementation. The convening provided an opportunity for the IGHD representatives to exchange experiences with international colleagues and explore evidence-informed approaches that advance climate action and population health.







EVENTS & CONVENINGS

IGHD CONVENES BREATHE PROJECT STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION IN GILGIT







IGHD convened a stakeholder consultation meeting for the BREATHE Project—“Impact of Green Energy for Cooking and Heating on Household Air Pollution and Health in Rural Communities of Pakistan”—on August 12, 2026, at the Professional Development Centre North in Gilgit.

Led by Dr Jai K. Das, the meeting brought together representatives from Karakoram International University, the Gilgit-Baltistan Environmental Protection Agency, government departments responsible for forests and energy, AKRSP, AKAH, WWF Pakistan, and Kamal Energy Solar Company.

Participants reviewed potential study sites, operational feasibility, and lessons from previous household energy interventions. Discussions focused on identifying scalable clean cooking and heating technologies, refining technical recommendations, and strengthening collaboration to address household air pollution and associated health risks in rural Gilgit-Baltistan.

The AKU team included Dr Khadija Vadsaria, Arjumand Rizvi, Farhana Tabassum, Dr Arsala Jameel Farooqui, Ahmed Atiullah, and Muhammad Shameer Qamar. The consultation helped establish a shared roadmap for linking research with practical energy solutions and informing environmental and health policies across the region.

EVENTS & CONVENINGS

IGHD LAUNCHES CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH MOOC WITH PANEL DISCUSSION AT AKU



IGHD launched its Climate Change and Health Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) during a panel discussion held on July 15, 2026, at the D-Lab, University Centre, Aga Khan University. Titled “Climate, Health, and Development: Launch of an Online Course for Low- and Middle-Income Countries,” the event brought together academic and institutional leaders to discuss strengthening climate-health education.

Dr Zulfiqar A. Bhutta hosted and moderated the session, with a virtual welcome message from Dr Paul Dhalla, Director of Environment, Climate and Sustainability at the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Dr Arsala Jameel Farooqui, Research Coordinator and Course Manager at IGHD, introduced the course’s nine-module structure and its development in collaboration with AKDN’s technical working group. Designed for undergraduate learners in low- and middle-income countries, the course is intended to be freely accessible in Pakistan and globally.

Panellists Dr Asad Ali, Miriam Kugele, Professor Muhammad Ali Nasir, and Professor Kulsoom Ghias explored the course’s relevance, institutional priorities, and the role of interdisciplinary education in preparing learners to address climate-related health challenges.

More than 65 participants attended in person, with others joining via Zoom. The session concluded with an audience discussion on climate-health learning and its practical application.

PANELLISTS



Dr Asad Ali



Miriam Kugele



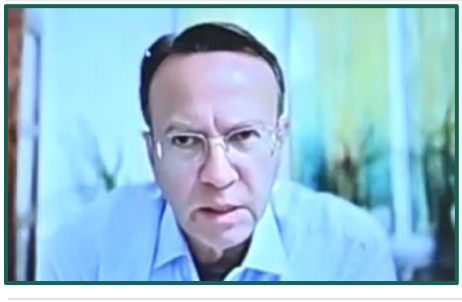
Prof Muhammad Ali Nasir



Prof Kulsoom Ghias











EVENTS & CONVENINGS

MUSHTAQ MIRANI PRESENTS RESEARCH ON POLIO VACCINE ACCEPTANCE AT FMIC CONFERENCE







Mushtaq Mirani, Manager Research at IGHD, presented "Transforming Social Norms to Improve Polio Immunization in High-Risk Areas of Pakistan" at the 16th FMIC Annual International Scientific Conference in Kabul, Afghanistan, on August 6, 2026.

The presentation shared findings from a mixed-methods, quasi-experimental study in high-risk areas of Karachi and Bannu. The study examined how participatory community engagement, combined with Conditional–Collective–Community-Based Incentives (C3Is), could reduce vaccine refusals and strengthen immunisation uptake.

Local community health committees engaged families through awareness sessions, household visits, and dialogue with trusted religious leaders, educators, and other stakeholders. Communities selected non-cash incentives linked to collective reductions in vaccine refusals, including improvements to shared facilities and support for livelihoods.

Findings highlighted the importance of trust, community ownership, and peer influence in promoting vaccine acceptance. All 11 intervention clusters in Karachi and seven of ten in Bannu achieved at least one incentive-eligible reduction target. The presentation underscored the value of locally grounded approaches that address families' concerns and strengthen relationships with vaccination teams.

EVENTS & CONVENINGS

IGHD WORKSHOP EXPLORES INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN









A two-day participatory workshop under the project "Embracing Ancestral Wisdom: Harnessing Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Adaptation and Resilience in Pakistan" was held on August 10–11, 2026, at the Professional Development Centre North in Gilgit.

The workshop brought together community members from Passu, Hassanabad, Shigar, and Tissar, alongside agricultural experts, regional researchers, policymakers, and civil society representatives. Participating institutions included AKDN, AKAH, AKRSP, WWF, and Karakoram International University. Mr. Asif Ullah Khan, Secretary of Health, Gilgit-Baltistan, attended the second day's proceedings as the chief guest.

Participants reviewed research findings on indigenous climate-adaptation strategies and provided community feedback to validate the study results. Discussions identified local priorities for resilience and explored how traditional knowledge and community experience could inform policy and adaptation practices.

The workshop supported dialogue between communities and institutions, highlighting the value of indigenous knowledge in developing locally relevant, evidence-informed responses to climate challenges across the region.

HEC REPRESENTATIVES MEET IGHD TEAM AT INSTITUTE OFFICE

Representatives from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) met with AKU research leadership at the IGHD office on July 23, 2026, to discuss institutional research strengths and opportunities for national collaboration. Participants included representatives from the Research Office, Medical College, BBS, School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM), Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), and IGHD.

Research leaders presented the research priorities of their respective sections, highlighting grants secured, ongoing areas of work, and their future directions and visions. These presentations provided an opportunity to explore shared interests and potential avenues for collaboration across disciplines and institutions.

HEC officials proposed a One Health framework to establish a Biomedical Research Consortium or National Cluster with two principal objectives: strengthening national research capacity through structured training and mentorship and creating a shared platform for cross-institutional research projects. The research leaders present were invited to contribute their perspectives to help shape the proposed initiative.







EVENTS & CONVENINGS

DR JAI DAS PARTICIPATES IN GLOBAL CEREBRAL PALSY PREVENTION SUMMIT IN THAILAND

Dr. Jai K. Das represented IGHD at the Global Cerebral Palsy Prevention Summit, held from September 11–13, 2026, in Bangkok, Thailand. Supported by Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Australia, the summit brought together researchers, clinicians, policymakers, advocates, and people with lived experience to identify prevention priorities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

Discussions informed the development of a Global Cerebral Palsy Prevention Roadmap and Taskforce. Dr. Das contributed perspectives from maternal and child health research in Pakistan and explored opportunities to establish a national cerebral palsy registry to strengthen local data and inform prevention efforts.

GLOBAL Cerebral Palsy Prevention — SUMMIT —
THE BEST START. EVERY BABY. EVERYWHERE.



EVENTS & CONVENINGS

IGHD RESEARCHERS DELIVER GUEST LECTURE ON URBAN DESIGN AND WELLBEING AT FAS

Humaira Nazir and Muhammad Shameer Qamar from IGHD delivered a guest lecture titled “Urban Design, Green Space & Physical Activity: Environments for Wellbeing” for students at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), Aga Khan University, Karachi, on September 22, 2026.

Invited by Professor Stephen Lyon, the speakers explored the relationship between built environments, green spaces, physical activity, and wellbeing. The lecture provided an opportunity for students to consider how the design of everyday spaces can support healthier and more active communities.

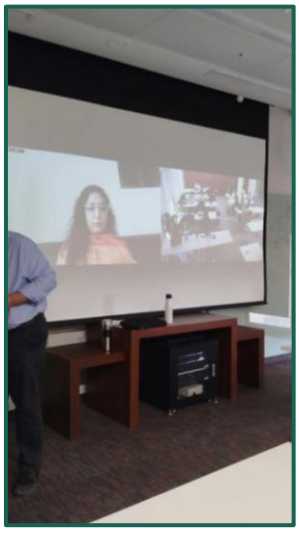
The session encouraged discussion and exchange with students, connecting IGHD’s work across the built environment and public health with learning at FAS.

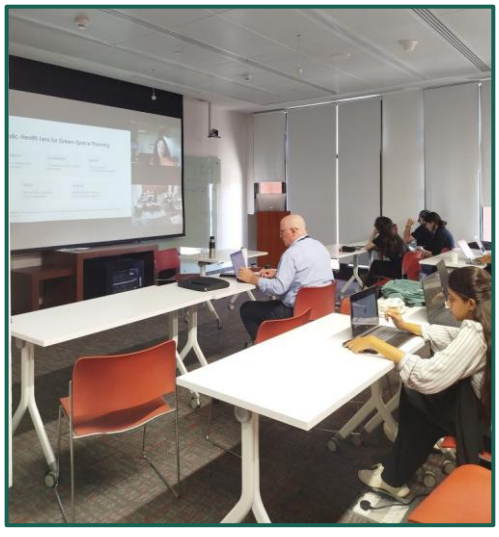
Humaira Nazir
Postdoctoral Fellow





Shameer Qamar
Research Associate







EVENTS & CONVENINGS

DR JAI DAS CONTRIBUTES TO PMHC WEBINAR ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Dr Jai K. Das participated in an online webinar titled “Eco-Anxiety and Resilience: Provincial Climate Crises and Youth Mental Health in Pakistan,” organised by the Pakistan Mental Health Coalition (PMHC) and its Youth Working Group on August 28, 2026.

The session explored how floods, heatwaves, droughts, and displacement affect the mental wellbeing of children, adolescents, and young people across Pakistan. It brought together provincial perspectives on climate-related psychological distress and approaches to strengthening resilience.

Dr Das contributed perspectives from Sindh, focusing on community-based interventions and support for young people affected by climate-related events. The discussion examined opportunities to connect local responses with broader health systems and policy frameworks, alongside the roles of parents, educators, healthcare providers, and youth organisations.



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

IGHD TEAM AWARDED SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS GRANT FOR SOLAR-POWERED SMART BENCH

An IGHD team led by Humaira Nazir, Postdoctoral Fellow, has been awarded the AKU Sustainable Campus Grant (SCG) 2026 for a project titled “Solar-powered smart bench as innovative and accessible infrastructure.” Announced on July 13, 2026, the award provides USD 2,500, equivalent to PKR 750,000, to support implementation.

The proposed bench combines outdoor seating with renewable energy and sustainable design to create a comfortable space for students and campus users to study, relax, and connect. Planned features include solar panels with battery storage, device-charging facilities, energy-efficient fans, and LED lighting, incorporated into a bamboo-based structure.

The project team includes Civil Engineer Muhammad Shameer Qamar, Research Associate, and Architects Sibghatullah Siddiqui and Rana Mohammad Usama, Research Assistants at IGHD.

PROJECT TEAM


Humaira Nazir


Shameer Qamar

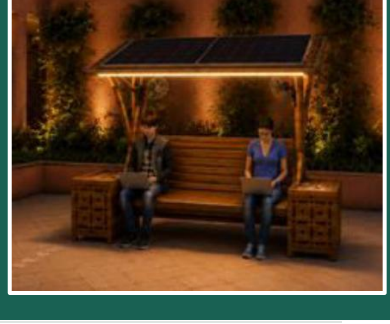

Sibghatullah Siddiqui


Rana Mohammad Usama

Supported by AKU’s Office of Environment & Sustainability, the initiative aims to demonstrate how practical campus infrastructure can promote clean energy, environmental awareness, and more sustainable use of shared outdoor spaces.







TRAINING, PROJECTS & FIELDWORK

IGHD CONDUCTS SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS WORKSHOP



Dr Syeda Kanza Naqvi led a three-day Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Workshop at Aga Khan University from July 6–8, 2026.

The workshop covered key stages of evidence synthesis, beginning with an introduction to systematic reviews, the PICO framework, and literature search strategies. Participants explored data extraction, effect measures, and different meta-analysis approaches, including intervention studies, proportion studies, meta-regression, and diagnostic accuracy.

Sessions combined interactive lectures, demonstrations, and practical group exercises, providing opportunities to develop search strategies, practise meta-analysis, and assess risk of bias. The programme also introduced the GRADE approach for assessing the certainty of evidence, with dedicated time for questions and troubleshooting.

Additional sessions were facilitated by Dr Muzna, Maira Niaz, and Dr Umaima Zaki. The workshop focused on building practical skills for conducting systematic reviews and critically appraising research evidence.







TRAINING, PROJECTS & FIELDWORK

IGHD CONTRIBUTES TO COCHRANE PAKISTAN WORKSHOP AT KIMS



IGHD faculty and researchers contributed to a two-day Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Workshop organised by Cochrane Pakistan at the Karachi Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) on July 8–9, 2026. The workshop brought together students, physicians, and researchers to build skills in conducting rigorous systematic reviews and applying research evidence in healthcare and academia.

Dr Jai Das delivered lectures on meta-analysis and the assessment of study quality, while Dr Syeda Kanza Naqvi provided hands-on training to guide participants through practical aspects of systematic reviewing. Other workshop experts included Prof M. Tanveer Sajid and Dr Saman Ijaz.

IGHD participants included Humaira Nazir, Syeda Kanza Naqvi, Kisa Zahra, and Hafsa Azhar. The sessions provided opportunities for practical learning and exchange with colleagues, supporting the development of evidence-synthesis skills relevant to public health research, policy, and practice.

TRAINING, PROJECTS & FIELDWORK

IGHD PARTICIPATES AND PRESENTS AT NUST CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMER SCHOOL



Muhammad Shameer Qamar, Research Associate, and Khadija Vadsaria, Senior Instructor, from IGHD participated in the Sindh Chapter of the fourth NUST Summer School on Climate Change, held from July 13–17, 2026, at the NUST PNEC Campus, Karachi. Shameer attended as a participant, while Khadija presented a session titled "Sustainable Food Systems & Agri-Climate Nexus." The programme was organised by NUST under its National Climate Education Programme.

The summer school explored five themes: technology and climate futures; climate governance in an era of polycrisis; green economies and just transitions; consumption and sustainable futures; and sustainable food systems.

Through interactive activities and group discussions, Khadija's session examined the journey of food from farm to plate, climate change's effects on food production, and agriculture's contribution to climate change. Participants explored practical solutions for climate-resilient food systems, including reducing food waste, conserving resources, and supporting sustainable food practices.

Expert lectures, panel discussions, and experiential learning brought together academics, policymakers, and practitioners to exchange knowledge and explore locally relevant climate solutions.

TRAINING, PROJECTS & FIELDWORK

PICCTURE TRIAL TRAININGS STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY CAPACITY FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

IGHD conducted capacity-building trainings for Village Management Committee (VMC) members and Lady Health Workers (LHWs) in Badin, Sindh, and Astore, Gilgit-Baltistan, under the Promoting Interventions for Climate Change to Upscale Resilience (PICCTURE) Trial. Trainings took place in Badin from June 9–July 7, 2026, and in Astore from July 14–21, 2026.









The programme covered four intervention components: Disaster Risk Reduction, Livelihood Diversification, Financial Literacy, and Health Awareness. Using a Training-of-Trainers approach, VMC members from selected intervention clusters were prepared to facilitate community learning and resilience-building activities. Separate LHW sessions focused on climate-responsive health awareness, household preparedness, identifying vulnerable household members, and referral pathways.

In Badin, the trainings were led by Mushtaque Mirani, Abdullah Babar, Yaseen Chandio, and Nazish. In Astore, sessions were led by Ahmed Atiullah, Abdullah Babar, Hameed, and Fozia, supported by the local study team. Rescue 1122 Gilgit-Baltistan master trainers provided practical instruction in CPR, bleeding control, choking response, and fracture management.

The trainings supported preparations for delivering the PICCTURE intervention across two climatically distinct settings, combining community mobilisation with frontline health-worker engagement to strengthen household preparedness and adaptive capacity.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

PREPARE-CC TEAM CONDUCTS CENTRAL TRAINING AND FIELD VISITS ACROSS FOUR PROVINCES

24	4	14-16
FIELD STAFF	PROVINCES	SEPTEMBER 2026

The PREPARE-CC project—Promoting Resilience, Preparedness, Adaptation, and Response to Climate Change in Complex Crises—conducted a three-day central training workshop from September 14–16, 2026, at the Ornate Hotel, Islamabad. Led by Farhana Tabassum, alongside co-facilitators Mushtaq Mirani and Dr Hafsa Azhar, the training brought together 24 field staff working in Ghotki, Sindh; Rajanpur, Punjab; Kacchi Bolan, Balochistan; and Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.





Sessions focused on standardising study methods and establishing a shared understanding of research objectives to support consistent data collection across the four sites. The project is led by Principal Investigator Dr Jai K. Das.

Following the workshop, the facilitators conducted field monitoring visits, oversaw study activities, and led selected key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Engagement with healthcare providers, peacebuilding actors, government stakeholders, NGO representatives, and community members explored local experiences of interconnected climate, conflict, and health challenges.

The visits helped translate central training into field practice while strengthening the team's understanding of local geographical, cultural, social, and linguistic contexts, supporting high-quality, context-sensitive data collection.











TRAINING, PROJECTS & FIELDWORK

AKU INTERNS AND COMMUNICATIONS TEAM VISIT SHAPES FIELD SITES IN MATIARI



Approximately 25 AKU interns, core team members, and representatives from the Strategic Communication and Documentary Team visited the SHAPES research sites in Matiari on July 16, 2026. The visit provided firsthand exposure to the implementation of structural heat-adaptation interventions and community-based research in rural Sindh.

Dr Syeda Kanza Naqvi, Assistant Manager, and Muhammad Khan Jamali, Research Manager, introduced the trial's objectives, study design, and implementation progress. The orientation covered community engagement, environmental monitoring, heat-illness surveillance, and ongoing data collection.

Visitors then toured selected intervention households and shared community spaces, attended meetings with male and female community members, and observed second-round follow-up interviews. Direct interaction with residents provided insights into their experiences of the interventions and the practical demands of field research.

The communications team recorded interviews and footage of project activities, household modifications, and community perspectives for documentary and outreach purposes. A closing discussion allowed participants to reflect on their observations and deepen their understanding of the trial.

TRAINING, PROJECTS & FIELDWORK

DR JAI DAS AND DR SYEDA KANZA NAQVI FACILITATE CRITICAL APPRAISAL AND MANUSCRIPT REVIEW WORKSHOP AT ISRC 2026



Dr. Jai K. Das facilitated a workshop titled "Manuscript Reviews, Appraisals and Why Being Critical Matters" at the International Student Research Conference (ISRC) 2026 on August 22, 2026, at Aga Khan University Medical College, Karachi.

The interactive session introduced participants to the fundamentals of critical appraisal and the role of manuscript review in assessing research quality. It explored key considerations when reviewing scientific work, helping participants understand how to evaluate research methods, interpret findings, and assess the strength of the evidence presented.

Dr. Syeda Kanza Naqvi, Assistant Manager, led the guided mock manuscript review, providing hands-on guidance as participants applied these principles and gained practical insight into the review process. The exercise encouraged participants to examine research critically and develop constructive feedback.

The workshop contributed to the conference's emphasis on connecting research knowledge with practical skills, supporting students and early-career researchers in becoming more thoughtful readers, reviewers, and authors of scientific literature.

PEOPLE & MILESTONES

IGHD WELCOMES DR KASHEF IJAZ AS ASSOCIATE FACULTY



Dr Kashef Ijaz joined IGHD as an Associate Faculty member during July–September 2026, expanding the Institute's network of collaborators supporting interdisciplinary research, education, and partnership engagement.

Associate Faculty members retain their primary appointments while contributing their expertise to IGHD's mission. The affiliation provides opportunities for joint research, implementation science, educational activities, and professional exchange across institutions and disciplines.

IGHD welcomes Dr Ijaz and looks forward to his contribution to the Institute's academic activities and collaborative work.

PEOPLE & MILESTONES

IGHD SUPPORTS STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



IGHD supported 17 interns through completed and ongoing placements, bringing together students from Pakistan and abroad. Managed by Dr Arsala Jameel Farooqui, the internships provided opportunities for engagement with the Institute's research and academic environment.

International interns joined through AKU's Global Engagement Office, participating in both in-person and virtual summer programmes. AKU Human Resources' ASPIRE Programme brought students from other universities across Pakistan, while additional interns joined through IGHD's referral pathways and AKU's Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

INTERN SUPERVISOR

Dr Arsala Jameel Farooqui



The programme supported student learning, professional development, and exchange among participants from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds.

HUMAIRA NAZIR MOVES TO NEW ACADEMIC ROLE AT NUST



IGHD bid farewell to Humaira Nazir, Postdoctoral Fellow, as she moves to a new academic role as Associate Professor at the School of Art, Design & Architecture (SADA), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad.

During her time at IGHD, Humaira contributed to multidisciplinary research on climate change, sustainable healthcare facilities, and environmental sustainability. Working with colleagues across public health, engineering, and architecture, she supported the Institute's growing portfolio of research on climate-resilient health systems in low- and middle-income countries.

At her farewell gathering, colleagues expressed their appreciation for her dedication, professionalism, and collaborative spirit. In her message to the department, Humaira thanked Dr Jai K. Das and Prof Zulfiqar A. Bhutta for their mentorship and guidance, and acknowledged the support of colleagues, collaborators, and administrative staff.

> *"The friendships and professional relationships I have built here are among the most valuable parts of my journey.*
>
> **— Humaira Nazir**





The IGHD team congratulates Humaira on her appointment and wishes her continued success as she brings together architecture, sustainability, and public health in the next chapter of her career.

PUBLICATIONS FROM IGHD (JULY–SEPTEMBER 2026)

Peer-reviewed journal articles authored and co-authored by IGHD faculty, fellows, and research staff during the quarter.

01 **Das JK, Hussain NF, Padhani ZA, Rizvi A, Chauhadry IA, et al.**
Assessment of health and nutrition status among children aged 5–9 years in Pakistan: a cross-sectional survey (2020). *The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia. September 2026.*
https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lansea/article/PIIS2772-3682(26)00140-X/fulltext

02 **Das JK, Naqvi SK, Bonell A, et al.**
Structural heat adaptation and education in a rural setting of Pakistan: protocol for a randomized controlled trial. *BMJ Open. August 2026.*
https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/16/8/e121448.info

03 **Tabassum F, Azhar M, Khalid A, Mirani M, Hussain NF, et al.**
Beyond Hesitancy: Current Multi-Level Polio Vaccine Refusals and Pathways to Acceptance in a High-Risk Region of Pakistan. *MDPI. August 2026.*
https://www.mdpi.com/2076-393X/14/8/719

04 **Das JK, Naqvi SK, Bonell A, Burman C, Augustin J, et al.**
Structural heat adaptation and education in urban settings (SHAPES trial): study protocol for a cluster randomised controlled trial. *BMJ Open. August 2026.*
https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/16/8/e120115

05 **Makena P, Oluoch F, Ondiek RI, Gudda F, Keter A, et al.**
A longitudinal multi-proxy geospatial classification of peri-urban transitions across community health units in coastal Kenya. *Springer Nature. August 2026.*
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12942-026-00483-5

06 **Jafri SK, Mazhar N, Mirza A, et al.**
Surveillance for neurodevelopmental impairment (NDI) in high-risk neonates: a cohort study at a tertiary care hospital in Pakistan. *BMJ Open. August 2026.*
https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/16/8/e121569

07 **Das JK, Salam RA, Padhani ZA, Rizvi A, Khatoon S, et al.**
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https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214109X26001816

08 **Naqvi SK, Hussain L, Kumari S, Madni V, Malik H, et al.**
Determinants of family planning use among married women of reproductive age in south Asia: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia. July 2026.*
https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lansea/article/PIIS2772-3682(26)00113-7/fulltext

09 **Jawad T, Rehman N, Hashmi M, Rizvi A, Padhani ZA, et al.**
Dietary Adequacy and Its Associated Factors Among Adolescents in a Rural District of Sindh. *MDPI. July 2026.*
https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/18/15/2438

10 **Zaki U, Qazi SH, Mehdi SS, Raza MA, Hashmi M, et al.**
Neonatal gastric perforation. A systematic review and meta-analysis. *ScienceDirect. July 2026.*
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2949711626000316

11 **Malik AA, Ariff S, Umer M, Nooruddin S, Habib MA, et al.**
Rates and causes of neonatal and under-five mortality: insights from a national household survey in Pakistan. *JoGH. September 2026.*
https://jogh.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/jogh-16-04211n.pdf

12 **Ashraf M, Azhar H, Fatima B, Siddiqui M.**
Mexico's Soda Tax as a Public Health Lever: A Case Study on Tackling Obesity and Diabetes through Fiscal Policy. *CABI Global Health Cases. July 2026.*
https://doi.org/10.1079/globalhealthcases.2026.0007

13 **Nyagaka F, Montgomery-Csobán T, Gichere I, Mwaniki M, Kavanagh K, et al.**
Performance of the Pre-Eclampsia Integrated Estimate of Risk-Machine Learning (PIERS-ML) model in a Kenyan cohort of women with pre-eclampsia- a retrospective test derivation validation study. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth. July 2026.*
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12884-026-09585-1

14 **Partap U, Costa JC, Liu E, Cliffer IR, Wang D, et al.**
Gestational weight gain and maternal immediate perinatal and postpartum outcomes in low and middle income countries: individual participant data meta-analyses. *BMJ Medicine. July 2026.*
https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjmed-2025-001558

15 **Hendrixson DT, Tiwari R, James P, Bhutta ZA, Briend A, et al.**
Maternal Health and Sociodemographic Characteristics Influence Infant Growth to 24 Months in the Tunza Mwana Cohort: A Prospective Cohort Study. *Maternal & Child Nutrition. July 2026.*
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC13176631/

16 **Geng J, Zeiler M, Werner ER, Wang Y, Ko YA, et al.**
Inflammation and micronutrient status of children and adolescents in 12 countries are only weakly associated: the BRINDA Project. *The Journal of Nutrition. August 2026.*
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022316626004323

17 **GBD 2023 Human Resources for Health Collaborators.**
Global, regional, and national burden of HIV/AIDS, 1990-2023, with the estimated burden attributable to intimate partner violence and forecasted impacts of funding cuts through 2030: results from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2023. *The Lancet HIV. August 2026.*
https://www.thelancet.com/article/S2352-3018(26)00147-5/abstract

18 **Basnyat B, Adhikari S, Shrestha P, Budhathoki S, Hossain MS, et al.**
Azithromycin with or without cefixime for suspected or culture-confirmed uncomplicated typhoid fever in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan (ACT-South Asia): a double-blind, parallel-group, randomised, placebo-controlled, phase 4 trial. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases. August 2026.*
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19 **Muhammad S, Muzzamil M, Abdul Malik A, Ahmed I, Rizvi A, et al.**
Impact of the Benazir Nashonuma Programme on maternal and child health and nutrition in Pakistan: protocol for a prospective cohort study. *BMJ Paediatrics Open. August 2026.*
https://bmjpaedsopen.bmj.com/content/10/1/e005047

20 **GBD 2023 Road Injuries Collaborators (Bhutta ZA).**
Global, regional, and national burden of road injuries 1990-2023: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2023. *The Lancet Public Health. September 2026.*
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