



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH
AND DEVELOPMENT

Institute for Global Health and Development

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Message from the Director

Dear Colleagues,



The recent floods in Pakistan have not only caused incomprehensible devastation but also set back much of the progress made since the last floods of 2010. With more than 33 million people affected and some 7.6 million people displaced, and a death toll of over 1,500 which includes 552 children, the tragedy is that the plight of the marginalised hasn't changed. Many of those affected are those living in flood plains and riverine areas. This calamity has raised alarms for consequential devastation that might follow, including widespread diseases and food insecurity. Unfortunately, the frequency of natural calamities due to climate change will only increase, and our work in climate science and health has become even more important under such circumstances.

This edition will not only serve its readers information on the new promising projects of the Institute, but also aims to encourage scientists and scholars to contribute to mitigation of and adaptation to climate change in Pakistan, and other low- and middle-income countries. We also provide information about an upcoming event in Pakistan that would be notable in this regard.

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



Efficacy of Zinc Fortified Fermented Wheat (EZAFFAW): A Randomized Control Trial

Zinc deficiency is one of the common micronutrient deficiencies and a major global health challenge. Approximately 17% of the global population does not get enough zinc in their diet. Pakistan has one of the highest rates of zinc deficiency in the world, affecting between 20 and 40% of the population, with large provincial and regional disparities.

This randomized control trial aims to develop and evaluate efficacy of 'optimally fermented' vs. 'non-fermented' zinc-fortified and -biofortified wheat flour on adolescents (10-19 years) and young-adult women (19-24 years), which are the high-risk groups for undernutrition. [Read more](#).



Rebuilding School Health and Nutrition to Address the Impact of COVID-19 on Learning

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that over 90% of the world's students or 1.6 billion children and youth were out of school at the peak of the pandemic and nearly 369 million children who rely on school meals needed to look for other sources of daily nutrition. In South Asia alone, 9 million adolescents dropped out of schools permanently because of school closures that lasted for nearly two years.

This systematic review aims to find evidence around the impacts of effective school health and nutrition programmes in low- and middle-income countries on overall health and wellbeing of children. [Read more.](#)



Deployment of COVID-19 Vaccines for Refugees and Migrants: Mixed-method Multi-country Study

An unprecedented 82 million, or approximately 1 in 30 people, have been forcibly displaced from their homes. This number is expected to increase due to the changing nature of conflict and compounding effects of climate change. Yet, little is known about the health needs of regular and irregular refugees/migrants, including coverage and uptake of immunisation.

This study aims to produce evidence of the barriers and enablers of COVID-19 vaccination for regular and irregular refugees/migrants in select low- and middle-income countries known to host significant refugee and migrant populations. [Read more.](#)



Supporting Women in Science

Over 150 early-career women faculty from various geographies of South-Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa applied to the programme, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. 119 participants have been shortlisted, and currently enrolled in the first phase of the programme.

Applications for the second batch of the programme will be announced in early 2023. For more information, [read here.](#)

Key Publications

The Lancet: Addressing the human costs and consequences of the Pakistan flood disaster

With more than 33 million people affected and some 7.6 million people displaced, the death toll has crossed 1,500 which includes 552 children. The differences from Pakistan's previous flood disaster in 2010 are stark. Despite warnings by the country's meteorological department, there was little coordination and the response from federal and provincial authorities was haphazard and inadequate. [Read more.](#)

The New York Times: Polio was almost eradicated. This year it staged a comeback.

There is vaccine hesitancy in Pakistan, but it is one of the largest. A team of scientists, led by Dr. Jai Das at Aga Khan University in Karachi, has found that giving communities an incentive to install water pumps may be more effective than giving people cash. It will take innovative strategies, patience and persistence in order to eradicate the disease by the end of the century. [Read more.](#)

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

News



High-income countries have a responsibility to help Pakistan: The Lancet comment

Authors of the Lancet article, including Dr Zulfiqar Bhutta, discuss what can—and should—be done and an urgent need for a climate adaptation and mitigation strategy. "This is not external assistance or charity; it is climate justice," stressed Dr Bhutta. For a country that contributes less than 0.5% to global carbon emissions annually, it is entirely reasonable to seek climate retribution to rebuild Pakistan's infrastructure and flood control systems. [Read more.](#)



AKU experts and Government of Pakistan join hands to improve Polio vaccine uptake

As the number of Polio cases pick up, the Government of Pakistan has reaffirmed its commitment to end Polio and announced vaccine campaigns with renewed rigor. There remains a high vaccine refusal rate in conflict-stricken areas, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan. As part of the Institute's [Polio project](#), it will support government's efforts and improve vaccine uptake by facilitating community engagement and conditional incentives. [Read more.](#)



Protecting the most vulnerable from global crises

Dr Zulfiqar A Bhutta, represented Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Pakistan, highlighted the ongoing efforts to rebuild children's school health and nutrition after #COVID19 at the International Conference on Sustainable Development 2022 plenary. [Read more.](#)

Reflections from IGHD's Associate Faculty



Dr Zul Merali, Professor and Founding Director, Brain and Mind Institute

How can natural calamities, such as floods, have mental health repercussions?

Natural calamities can have a major impact on mental wellbeing of the impacted populations. At a macro level, due to the direct consequences of the floods, people are forced to abandon their domiciles and communities to locate to dryer and safer grounds. In addition, their food security is challenged. These major stressors, have a direct impact on people's mental health.

Which groups are most vulnerable to post-calamity mental trauma and why?

Women and children are especially vulnerable under such circumstances. Women bear primary responsibility for their children's wellbeing. Furthermore, they have less agency than men to take an action under such debilitating and competitive circumstances.

Given that climate disasters are increasing in frequency, what is your advice to the healthcare workers who are providing relief in the affected areas?

As the demands from health care workers are increasing exponentially, they must be mindful about potential burnout. We must ensure that healthcare workers are provided with all the support they need. Just as we are instructed as airline passengers to put on our oxygen mask first before helping others in an emergency, our health workers must get the support and training first, so they can help others.

Reflections from IGHD's Summer Interns



"My key takeaway is that there is always space to do more. While looking for trials or working on search strategies, the solution to a dead-end is to always keep going, and it worked." – **Neha Novlani, BSc., Social Anthropology, Lahore University of Management Sciences.**



"It was my first internship experience in a professional work environment, where I learnt what research work is like in the real world." – **Yousaf Malik, BSc., Social Development & Policy, Habib University.**



"Research is the backbone of policymaking, and as a future economist, IGHD was an ideal learning ground for me." – **Zara Khazada, BSc., Economics, Institute of Business Administration.**



"IGHD's learning environment motivated me to apply my classroom learning and further hone my skills with the help of my mentors." – **Dr Yousuf Ali, MPhil in Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Aga Khan University.**



"This journey has encouraged me to continue learning about research stages and strategies. As this was my first on-site internship, I learnt skills that I can take forward in my career." – **Anosha Essani, BScN, Aga Khan University.**

Webinars and Dialogues

#ICSD2022 Plenary 9
September 20, 16:00 - 17:00 GMT

The Importance of the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Principle in Times of Crises

Speakers:

- Dr. Ali Ruiz Coronel, UNAM (SDSN Mexico)
- Dr. Zulfiqar Bhutta, The Aga Khan University, (SDSN Pakistan)
- Prof Heinrich Bohlmann, University of Pretoria, (SDSN South Africa)
- Moderator: María Cortés Puch, Vice President of Network, SDSN

The Importance of the 'Leave No One Behind (LNOB)' Principle in Times of Crises

[Watch here](#)

**Global Child and Adolescent Health
Current Challenges and Opportunities for Action**

Presented by: Dr Zulfiqar A Bhutta

Dr Zulfiqar Bhutta's Lecture at Gairdner Symposium

[Watch here](#)

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

Obituary



It is with deep sorrow that we share the news of the passing of Dr Shereen Zulfiqar Bhutta, w/o Dr Zulfiqar A Bhutta, on Sunday, 11 September 2022, in Canada.

Dr Shereen was one of the senior-most OBGYN professionals of Pakistan who had served as Professor and Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center, Karachi for over a decade. She had also served as a teacher/trainer to a whole generation of medical students and postgraduate trainees for well over three decades. She is recognised nationally and internationally for her contributions to the specialty and advocacy for women living in marginalised populations. She will be remembered for her strength of character, integrity, and compassion. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Dr Bhutta and his family and pray to Allah for the eternal peace of the departed soul. Aameen.

Mark your Calendars: Upcoming Event

Climate Change and Water-related Challenges in Pakistan: Tangible Solutions

When: 16-17 December 2022

Where: Hybrid, Aga Khan University, Stadium Road, Karachi, Pakistan

Water security and conservation are one of the significant challenges facing Pakistan. Nevertheless, Pakistan continues to depend on a single river system and unreliable water infrastructure, exposing the population to the risk of periodic floods and chronic water shortages. This conference will mobilise scholars, policy advisors, and think-tanks from across Pakistan and beyond, highlight the future roadmap for sustainable water security and conservation, and encourage proactive contribution to climate adaptation and resilience strategies in the region.

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.