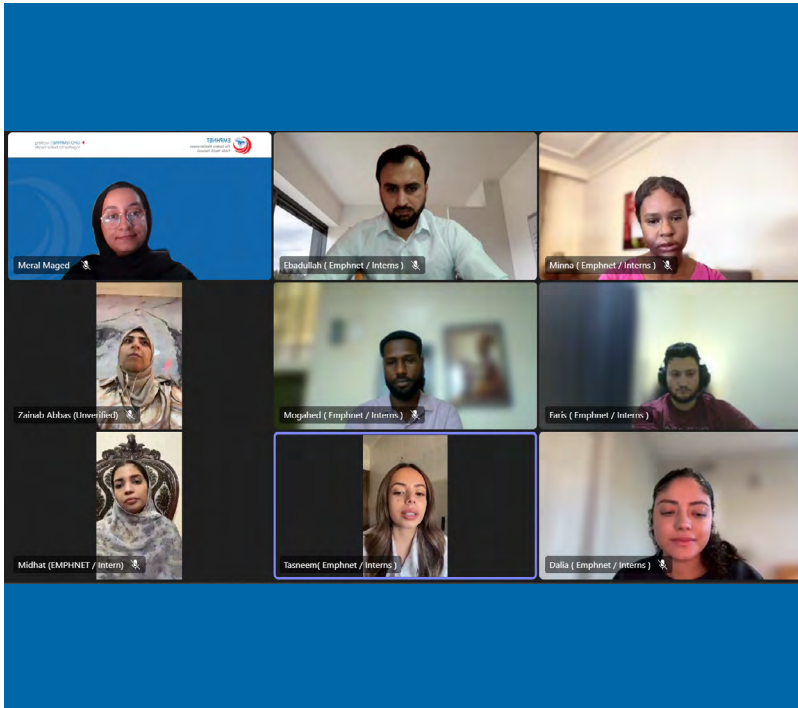


ENGAGE INTERNSHIP

DECEMBER 2025 – MAY 2026 NEWSLETTER – ISSUE 11



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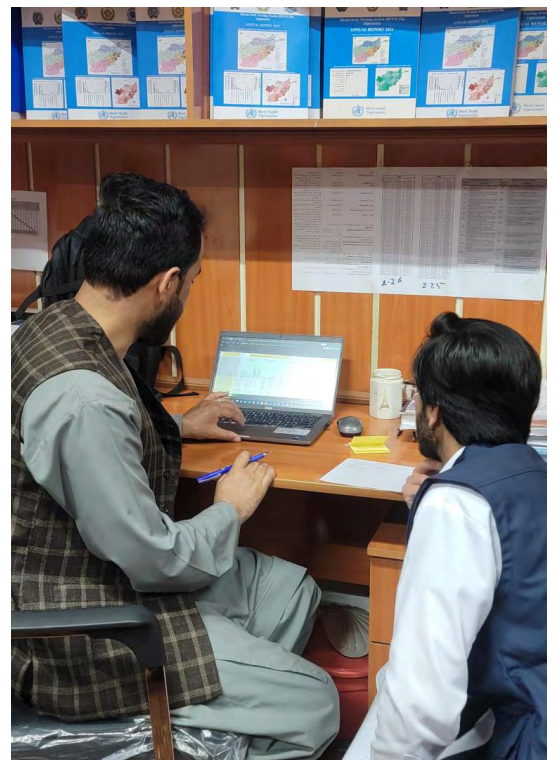
Dear Readers,

Welcome to Issue 11 of the Engage Internship Newsletter, covering the period from December 2025 to May 2026.

In this issue, we highlight the journeys, experiences, and achievements of interns, alumni, and mentors across different public health areas, including epidemiology, emergency preparedness, humanitarian response, research, communication, and project management. Through stories, reflections, and testimonials from interns representing different countries and institutions, this issue showcases the value of mentorship, experiential learning, and collaboration in shaping the next generation of public health professionals.

We remain grateful to the mentors, teams, partners, and interns whose commitment and contributions continue to strengthen the Engage Internship Program and its learning community.

We hope you enjoy this issue!



EMPHNET

The Eastern Mediterranean
Public Health Network

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Feature Story

From Classroom to Field: The Impact of the Engage Internship Program



Engage interns and mentors during the 2022 graduation ceremony at EMPHNET HQ in Amman, Jordan

Building Public Health Through Experiential Learning

Public health is built on more than academic knowledge. It depends on professionals who can move between data and communities, research and response, laboratories and field investigations. As health challenges become increasingly complex and interconnected, practical experience has become an essential part of preparing the next generation of the public health workforce (Zhang & Kim, 2024; Institute of Medicine, 2003).

Internship programs play an important role in bridging classroom learning with public health practice. Through mentorship, field exposure, technical training, and collaboration across disciplines, internships help young professionals strengthen their skills, explore career pathways, and better understand the realities of public health work (Adams et al., 2001; Hamelin et al., 2018).

From Academic Learning to Field Epidemiology

At EMPHNET, the Engage Internship Program was developed with this goal in mind. The program provides students and young professionals with structured, mentorship-driven opportunities across different public health areas, allowing interns to contribute to ongoing projects while gaining hands-on experience in regional and global health work.



Jack Carew presenting his internship work and reflections during the Engage Internship Program in 2022

One example of this impact is the journey of Jack Carew, whose experience through the Engage Internship Program helped shape his path in epidemiology and global health research.

At the time of his internship, Jack was pursuing a Master of Public Health degree online at the University of Vermont while living in Amman, Jordan as part of the Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA) Fellowship. Prior to joining EMPHNET, he had conducted research on cutaneous leishmaniasis at the Pasteur Institute of Morocco, an experience that sparked his interest in field epidemiology and infectious disease transmission. That experience strengthened his interest in combining laboratory research, field epidemiology, and community engagement.

Jack joined the Engage Internship Program seeking practical experience in epidemiology and public health research in Jordan. He was especially interested in learning more about brucellosis transmission and strengthening his professional Arabic in technical public health settings.

“I also was very motivated by the opportunity to engage with EMPHNET, a leader in public health in Jordan and across the region,” Jack shared.

During his internship, Jack worked on disease control and brucellosis-related research projects, contributing to quantitative epidemiological analysis on brucellosis prevalence and risk factors among slaughterhouse workers in Jordan. His work involved using statistical methods, including logistic regressions and chi-squared tests, and contributing to a draft manuscript examining brucellosis seroprevalence among workers and animals across different governorates.

Beyond data analysis, the internship provided Jack with direct field exposure through visits to several brucellosis sentinel sites across Jordan, including the Amman slaughterhouse and the Mafraq Public Health Laboratory. He also received training on policy brief writing and drafted a brief highlighting the importance of the One Health approach in Jordan.

Applying Public Health in Practice

For Jack, one of the most valuable aspects of the experience was the opportunity to apply concepts learned during his MPH studies to real-world public health work.

“This internship was helpful in that it allowed me to practice the epidemiology and biostatistical tools that I had learned in the classroom while completing my MPH,” he shared. *“In contrast to my MPH courses, I had the opportunity to use real data in the internship, which had not been designed for a classroom activity or skill-building exercise.”*

“The opportunity to visit various field sites solidified my interest in field-based public health investigations,” he reflected. *“I greatly enjoyed interfacing with public health laboratory workers in various governorates and working on a multidisciplinary team to investigate brucellosis epidemiology through lab- and field-based approaches.”*



Jack Carew during a field visit as part of his work on brucellosis research and public health investigations in Jordan

From Internship to Global Health Research

Following his internship at EMPHNET, Jack continued building his experience in epidemiology and infectious disease research. He later conducted breast cancer epidemiology research in Romania as part of the Cancer Epidemiology Education in Special Populations (CEESP) Fellowship before joining the Catteruccia Laboratory at the Harvard School of Public Health as a research assistant focusing on malaria transmission research.

Today, Jack is a PhD candidate in the Department of Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases at the Yale School of Public Health, where he studies innovative approaches to surveillance of drug-resistant malaria in Uganda. He currently works as a Fogarty LAUNCH Fellow in collaboration with Gulu University and the Infectious Diseases Research Collaboration.

Mentorship, Networking, and Lasting Impact

Reflecting on the internship, Jack emphasized the value of mentorship, networking, and practical learning opportunities.

“My experience at EMPHNET allowed me to apply skills that I had learned in the classroom in diverse settings across Jordan,” he said. “Furthermore, the internship provided me with important networking opportunities, and I was able to leverage connections made as an intern to provide advice and guidance as I explored careers and academic programs after the internship.”

Jack also highlighted the continued value of the professional relationships he built during the internship, including ongoing collaboration with EMPHNET mentors and colleagues. Reflecting his continued commitment to supporting future public health professionals, he also expressed interest in mentoring interns pursuing graduate studies and careers in epidemiology and global health.

“The Engage internship was an invaluable opportunity that anchored the epidemiological and biostatistical tools that I learned during my MPH into real-world practice and motivated me to continue working in global health at the interface of lab- and field-based epidemiological approaches.”



Jack with fellow interns and the internship coordinator following the Engage Internship Program graduation ceremony

Spotlight

From Displacement to Public Health Leadership

Dr. Mogahed Helaly's Journey with EMPHNET

Through the Engage Internship Program, EMPHNET continues to support the development of the next generation of public health professionals across the region. By providing mentorship, practical experience, and multidisciplinary learning opportunities, the program helps strengthen workforce capacity while also creating space for fresh perspectives, new ideas, and emerging talent.

One of these journeys is that of Dr. Mogahed Helaly, whose path evolved from an internship opportunity into a professional role supporting public health efforts in Sudan.

From Frontline Medicine to Public Health

Before joining EMPHNET as an intern, Dr. Mogahed worked in clinical medicine in challenging and resource-limited settings in Sudan. During the conflict, he provided frontline care under difficult conditions and later established a temporary clinic in a displacement camp in White Nile State, where he treated more than 5,000 patients over several months while also supporting displaced families with basic necessities.

Reflecting on this experience, he explained that it changed how he understood healthcare and public health.

"I realized that clinical care alone cannot address the broader determinants of health when systems collapse," he shared. "Many of the patients I treated were suffering not only from illness, but from the conditions around them."

This realization motivated him to shift his focus toward public health and emergency



Dr. Mogahed providing frontline clinical care in a displacement camp in Sudan

preparedness. After arriving in Kampala, Uganda, as a refugee, joining the Engage Internship Program at EMPHNET became an important step toward that goal.

Learning Through Practice

Dr. Mogahed began his internship remotely with both the Public Health Emergency Management Center (PHEMC) and the Center of Communication and Health Promotion (CCHP) at EMPHNET, where he gained exposure to emergency preparedness, outbreak response, risk communication, and community engagement.

Working across both centers strengthened his understanding of emergency preparedness and community engagement.

"Coming from a context where health systems had collapsed, I approached my responsibilities with a strong sense of urgency and practical

awareness of what happens when preparedness fails,” he reflected. “This perspective helped me connect theoretical knowledge with real-world application.”

During the internship, he was also offered the opportunity to enroll in courses through the International Academy of Public Health (IAPH), EMPHNET’s training arm. He later received a scholarship to pursue a Master of Public Health in Emergency Management, where he strengthened his knowledge in epidemiology, surveillance systems, outbreak investigation, and emergency preparedness.

“It shifted my perspective from responding to crises to preventing them, and from isolated actions to building resilient systems,” he explained.

From Internship to Employment

Dr. Mogahed’s internship journey later evolved into a full-time opportunity with EMPHNET in the Sudan Country Office, where he currently serves as a Technical Officer focusing on community engagement and public health programs.

In his current role, he supports and coordinates activities related to emergency preparedness, disease surveillance, health promotion, and community-based interventions. His work also

includes projects aimed at controlling mosquito-borne diseases in Kassala State through community engagement and behavior change strategies.

Today, he continues supporting preparedness and community resilience initiatives in conflict-affected settings.

“Through this experience, I have come to see public health not only as a field, but as a responsibility that requires commitment, collaboration, and a deep connection to the communities we serve,” he shared.

For future interns and young professionals interested in public health, Dr. Mogahed emphasized the importance of remaining committed, adaptable, and open to learning.

“Public health is a demanding but deeply meaningful field,” he said. *“Every experience, especially the challenging ones, contributes to your growth.”*

Reflecting on the impact of the internship on his life and career, Dr. Mogahed concluded:

“I learned that even when systems collapse, purpose does not, and choosing to continue is what turns hardship into impact.”



Dr. Mogahed during a field assessment in Kassala, Sudan, supporting mosquito-borne disease prevention efforts

Mentorship Corner


New Mentors Helping Shape the Future of Public Health

Behind every meaningful internship experience is a mentor willing to invest time, knowledge, guidance, and trust in the next generation of public health professionals. At EMPHNET, mentorship is not viewed as an additional task, but as an important part of how we grow as professionals, strengthen our teams, and contribute to building a stronger public health workforce across the region.

In this issue, we highlight mentors who joined the program during Cycles 3 and 4 of 2025. Coming from different teams, technical areas, and leadership levels across EMPHNET, each brought a unique mentoring style and perspective to the experience while supporting interns from diverse academic and professional backgrounds.

Dr. Magid Al-Gunaid

Deputy Executive Director and Director of the Public Health Programs




Dr. Magid Al-Gunaid mentored Habboba Musa, a recent Master of Public Health graduate from Columbia University, whose internship focused on examining the broader implications of funding cuts on public health systems and activities in the region. Reflecting on mentorship from a leadership perspective, Dr. Magid described it as an investment in the future of public health in the region.

“Building sustainable public health systems starts with investing in people,” he shared. *“Mentorship creates an opportunity to support young professionals as they transition from academic learning into real-world public health practice.”*

He also emphasized that mentorship at EMPHNET extends beyond formal mentor-intern relationships and is reflected in how teams support and learn from one another across projects and technical areas.

Dr. Deema Albakri

Senior Technical Officer, Public Health Programs Team



Dr. Deema Albakri mentored Midhat Fatima, a Master of Public Health student from Pakistan. She described mentorship as a way of giving back through the same type of support and guidance that shaped her own academic and professional journey.

“I have been fortunate throughout my academic and professional journey to be supported by mentors who shaped not only the way I think and work, but also the way I approach growth, learning, and challenges,” she shared.

Working with an intern from a different country and background, Dr. Deema approached the experience as a two-way learning opportunity built on discussion, reflection, and exchange.

Dr. Zeina Abdel Majeed*Senior Technical Officer, Public Health Programs Team*

Dr. Zeina Abdel Majeed mentored Dr. Ameera Ba-Fadhl, a health professional from Yemen and a recent graduate of a Master's in Public Health. Reflecting on her experience, Dr. Zeina highlighted the importance of supporting public health professionals as they continue building practical skills and confidence throughout their careers.

"Mentorship allows me to share my experience while also fostering the next generation of professionals who can make meaningful contributions to the field," she shared.

Dr. Zeina described the experience as both positive and rewarding, highlighting Ameera's commitment, curiosity, and willingness to learn throughout the internship.

Dr. Zeina also emphasized the value of maintaining open communication, encouraging questions, and creating supportive learning environments for both mentors and interns.

**Ms. Maisam Ibdah***Project Manager, PMO Team*

Ms. Maisam Ibdah mentored two interns from very different academic and professional backgrounds: Diego Licon, a Master of Public Health student from Columbia University in the United States originally from Mexico, and Minatalla Abbas, a bachelor's student in Economics and International Economics from the University of Nottingham Malaysia originally from Sudan.

She described mentorship as an opportunity to support young professionals while also learning from the fresh perspectives interns bring to the program.

"Both interns brought unique strengths and strong motivation, and working with them reinforced the importance of tailoring mentorship to individual needs rather than following a single structured approach for everyone."

Ms. Maisam explained that her mentoring approach focused on understanding each intern's goals, strengths, and areas for development early on, while maintaining regular communication and creating a supportive environment suited to each intern's background and learning needs. She also highlighted the importance of helping interns build connections across the organization and engage beyond their immediate tasks.

Together, these experiences reflect the collaborative learning environment the program aims to foster across EMPHNET. By bringing together interns and mentors from different technical areas, backgrounds, and experiences, the program continues to support the development of a stronger and more connected public health workforce across the region.



Keeping Up with Our Interns and Alumni

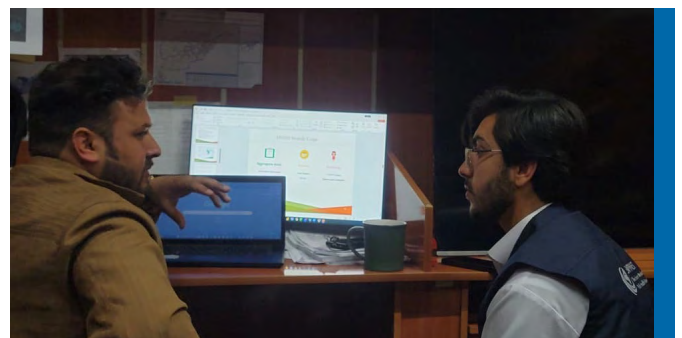
In this section, we highlight recent activities, achievements, field experiences, and professional milestones that reflect the continued engagement and contributions of our interns and alumni.

Nisreen Abukashawa previously interned with EMPHNET through the One Health Unit and PHEMC while completing her studies in Global Health at the University of Geneva. Today, she serves as the Head of Mission for CADUS in Sudan, leading humanitarian operations and emergency interventions supporting communities affected by conflict and displacement. Reflecting on her journey, Nisreen described her internship experience as an important step that contributed to shaping her professional path in global health and humanitarian work.



Habboba Musa, an intern with the Public Health Programs team, presented during EMPHNET’s Monthly Technical Day (MTD), where she shared findings from her research on “The Impact of the 2025 U.S. Funding Cuts on Public Health in the MENA Region.”

Yahya Hamidi, a Polio and Routine Immunization intern at EMPHNET’s Afghanistan Country Office, participated in field visits to different departments within the National Disease Surveillance and Response (NDSR) system and the Ministry of Public Health in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Ameerah Ba-Fadhli interned with EMPHNET’s Public Health Programs Department, where she contributed to activities related to cervical cancer prevention, HPV vaccination, and neglected tropical diseases in Yemen. Today, she serves as the Deputy Director of the Office of the Ministry of Public Health and Population in Hadhramout, Yemen, continuing her work in strengthening public health programs.

Testimonials

From different countries, academic backgrounds, and technical areas, our interns shared reflections on their experiences, learning journeys, and the impact the Engage Internship Program had on their professional growth.



Diego Antonio Quintana Licona

One Health Intern, Master's in Public Health Student at Columbia University

“My internship at EMPHNET allowed me to work with a multicultural and multinational team, which gave me professional experience outside of the context of the United States. It was both refreshing and enriching to be exposed to different professional value systems and work ethics. Through this experience, I feel more competent and knowledgeable to work on projects in the region, and I hope to continue learning and growing in this field.”



Simone Boles

Public Health Emergency Management Intern, Master's in Public Health Student at Emory University

“My internship with EMPHNET strengthened my commitment to public health in humanitarian settings and gave me the opportunity to contribute to meaningful research on community-based mental health support in Gaza. The experience deepened my understanding of global mental health, emergency response, and interdisciplinary public health work.”



Dalia Habash

Polio and Routine Immunization Intern, Master's in Public Health Student at Emory University

“What started as a practicum experience became one of the most formative parts of my MPH journey. Through my internship at EMPHNET, I had the opportunity to contribute to meaningful public health work, collaborate with experts across the region, and grow tremendously both professionally and personally.”





Zainab Naseer

Project Management Intern, National Coordinator of Iraq FETP

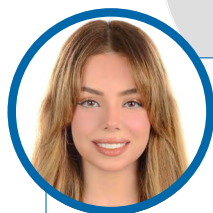
“I joined EMPHNET to strengthen my project management skills and contribute to its impactful work in public health. This experience helped me learn from my mentor, understand the full project cycle, and apply new knowledge to improve health outcomes in my country.”



Aws Rababah

Center of Excellence for Applied Epidemiology (CEAE) and Public Health Emergency Management Center Intern (PHEMC), Master’s in Global Healthcare Management from Coventry University

“During my internship at EMPHNET, I gained hands-on experience across field-level public health activities, data analysis, technical reporting, and humanitarian programming. Contributing to fieldwork, epidemiological data analysis, technical writing, and reporting strengthened my understanding of applied public health practice within complex regional and humanitarian settings.”



Tasneem Mere

– One Health and Project Management Intern, Master’s in Public Health Graduate from Brunel London University

“My internship at EMPHNET was a highly enriching experience that significantly contributed to both my professional and personal growth. Working with different mentors and teams allowed me to gain exposure to interdisciplinary public health work, partnerships, mapping analysis, and project management, while strengthening my confidence, analytical skills, and passion for public health.”





Ebadullah Merza

Polio and Routine Immunization Intern, Master of Public Health Graduate from University of Huddersfield

“My internship with EMPHNET was a valuable experience that strengthened my understanding of polio eradication efforts, particularly in Afghanistan. Through contributing to work related to the polio serosurvey and conducting a comprehensive literature review, I deepened my understanding of population immunity, immunization strategies, and evidence-based public health decision-making.”



Midhat Fatima

Disease Control and Prevention Intern, Master’s in Public Health Student at Health Services Academy

“My internship with EMPHNET strengthened my knowledge, skills, and passion for public health while giving me hands-on experience in disease prevention, stakeholder engagement, and public health communication. The structured mentorship and supportive learning environment made the experience both meaningful and professionally rewarding.”



Ameera Ba-Fadhli

Public Health Programs Intern, Health Professional

“My internship with EMPHNET was a very meaningful experience that helped me grow as a public health professional while contributing to projects supporting health system improvement efforts in Yemen. Through working on initiatives related to cervical cancer, HPV vaccination, and neglected tropical diseases, I strengthened my skills in coordination, teamwork, and public health planning while gaining valuable experience working with national and international stakeholders.”





Heba Metwally

Research and Policy and Workforce Capacity Intern, Master’s in Global Health Student at Emory University


“This internship has been formative for my professional identity. It allowed me to work at the intersection of research, training, and implementation in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, exactly where I hope to build my career. I am leaving this experience with stronger skills in systematic review methods, quantitative interpretation, curriculum review, and stakeholder analysis; a deeper understanding of postpartum mental health and One Health in the region; and a model of mentorship and collaboration that I will carry forward.”





Minatalla Abbas

Project Management Intern, Economics and International Economics Undergraduate Student at University of Nottingham Malaysia (UNM)

“This internship strengthened my understanding of project management in international public health settings and enhanced my confidence in professional environments. The experience showed me how structured planning, coordination, and teamwork contribute to the success of impactful development projects.”





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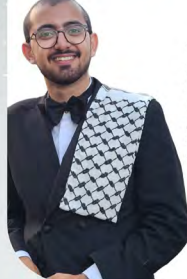



This course exceeded my expectations; it was highly informative, very practical, and truly engaging. It helped me connect my technical background with public health concepts, particularly in areas such as disease prevention and community health.

Ahmed Bashir



www.iaph.org

The health project management course provided a comprehensive look at the steps of project management from a public health perspective. It equipped me with the fundamental knowledge and skills necessary to lead a successful health project of my own.

Fadi Basha

Announcements

EMPHNET Ninth Regional Conference: Call for Abstracts

Current interns and alumni are encouraged to submit abstracts to EMPHNET's Ninth Regional Conference, which will take place in Amman, Jordan, from October 25–28, 2026, under the theme: **“One Health: Building Effective Partnerships for Humans, Animals, and the Environment.”**

The conference provides an opportunity for students, researchers, and public health professionals to share their work, research, and experiences while connecting with experts and institutions from across the region and beyond.

Abstract submissions are open from April 1 to July 1, 2026.

We encourage Engage interns and alumni to consider contributing their work and participating in discussions advancing collaboration across human, animal, and environmental health.

Check the full details [here](#).



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The Ninth EMPHNET Regional Conference

One Health: Building Effective Partnerships for Humans, Animals, and the Environment

**October 25 - 28, 2026
Amman, Jordan**

Call for Abstracts! Now Open

**Submission Dates
April 1 – July 1, 2026**

GHD|EMPHNET: Working Together for Better Health

The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) is a regional network that focuses on strengthening public health systems in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and beyond. EMPHNET works in partnership with ministries of health, non-government organizations, international agencies, private sector, and relevant institutions from the region and the globe to promote public health and applied epidemiology. To advance the work of EMPHNET, Global Health Development (GHD) was initiated to build coordination mechanisms with partners and collaborators. Together, GHD|EMPHNET is dedicated to serving the region by supporting efforts to promote public health policies, strategic planning, sustainable financing, resource mobilization, public health programs, and other related areas.

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