



معهد الصحة العالمية

# LENS

GLOBAL HEALTH INSTITUTE E-NEWSLETTER



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# Message from the Founding Director



Dear LENS readers,

For decades, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been suffering from armed conflicts and political turmoil, most of which have been protracted. As a result, the region is the global epicenter of humanitarian crises. Issues such as the refugee burden (highest concentration in the World), fragile states that also serve as refugee host countries, lack of access to basic services are few examples of challenges. In this context, the question is whether standard (traditional) global health interventions can be implemented effectively. The simple answer is probably not!

The answer is a result of GHI's work with partners over the past few years. In our humble experience, our region (probably similar to other regions in the World) has a context that necessitates a customized, possibly bespoke, approach. Needless to say, although not very clear to some, the customization goes beyond the linguistic translation of global health knowledge and tools. It entails an original thinking of how global health interventions including humanitarian work, capacity building, community engagement can be structured in a manner that factors in what is referred to as the ecology of a region. In our region, the most relevant ecology linked to global health is the **ecology of war**.

Although not our only focus, GHI has been engaged in many programs and projects that tackled that intersection between global health and the ecology of war. That is why we decided to focus this issue of the LENS on that intersection. The issue discusses the challenges facing the humanitarian sector. It showcases how GHI and its partners are attempting to contribute to the response to the exigencies of recurrent emergencies and build capacities in a system that is distorted by the complexity of war injuries.

The publication of this issue of the LENS also coincides with our fourth anniversary. Despite not being able to conduct "business as usual" given all of the challenges COVID-19 posed, GHI's team continued to support global health in many ways. Examples of which are presented below:

- o Building the capacity of 217 NGOs' staff members (working in more than 100 organizations) through courses and workshops
- o Conducting research, with partners, in 9 different countries
- o Training of more than 500 people through specialized workshops
- o Engaging with more than 20 primary healthcare centers
- o Producing more than 30 research papers, and many more publications
- o Providing training and a certificate for nearly 50 women from refugee and host communities as community health workers

I am personally indebted to the wonderful team we have at the Institute. Their dedication, commitment and hard work is inspiring!

In the occasion of our anniversary, I would like to reiterate our commitment, and passion, to serve the people of our region, especially with ever mounting challenges. Early on, we knew that we cannot do it alone. As with our mother institution, our partners and communities are part of who we are and what we do!

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the LENS, to find out our latest activities, events and publications. We invite you to navigate through our website and follow our social media to stay updated. Looking forward to your continuous engagement!

*Shadi Saleh*



***Ginane Makki Bacho “The Scrap Metal Collector”, Cedar Tree series (1990), Welded shrapnel and shell fragments***

Ginane Makki Bacho is a Lebanese-born artist (1947) and Master’s in Fine Arts graduate of Pratt Institute (1987). Bacho’s work spans sculpture, painting, photography and video art, and has been showcased in several solo and group exhibitions in Lebanon and the Middle East region, amongst them “Road to Peace” at the Beirut Art Center and “Salon d’Automne” in the Sursock Museum.

The artist’s welding work dates from 1983 when shrapnel and shell fragments, generated by war events, invited themselves into her home. Across the years, the amassed metal scraps were assembled, welded and transformed into realistic figures.

In 1990, Bacho produced her Cedar Tree series. As the emblem represented on the Lebanese flag, the Cedar Tree serves as a reminder of the country’s violent past war events, and of the still persistent ecology of war that engulfs Lebanon and the region.



# Highlights

## GHI Celebrates Its Fourth Anniversary



In July, GHI celebrates its anniversary as an institute. On this occasion, we produced online videos to acknowledge the great effort and work by our team and the support of our partners who kept driving us to achieve the best we can!

Despite the hard circumstances that affected the World during this year, GHlers didn't give up.

Together for Global Health, now more than ever!

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

## NGOi Celebrates Its 2-Year Anniversary with a Series of Engaging Activities



## A State of Chronic Emergency: Breaking the Cycle of Endemic War in Gaza



## MUH Has Delivered More Than 40 Certificates to Syrian and Lebanese Women



## E-SAHHA PROGRAM ESP

### E-Sahha Program Launches Research Activities at 20 Primary Healthcare Centers across Lebanon

*May 2021*

As part of its Gamification, Artificial Intelligence and mHealth Network for Maternal Health Improvement (GAIN MHI) project supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the E-Sahha Program initiated research activities at 20 primary healthcare centers (PHC) across Lebanon in partnership with the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health and UNRWA.



Prior to the launch of the centers-based activities, the project research team conducted a 2-day inception and training workshop for the PHCs directors, nurses, and midwives, during which designated staff were introduced to the data collection process and tools.



The GAIN MHI project aims to improve maternal health and enhance the uptake of antenatal care services among disadvantaged and refugee pregnant women through the employment of an innovative contextualized multi-component digital health intervention.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE E-SAHHA PROGRAM](#)

## A State of Chronic Emergency: Breaking the Cycle of Endemic War in Gaza

June 2021



GHI has recently hosted a webinar with Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah, the director of the Conflict Medicine Program (CMP) at GHI, that was moderated by Professor Richard Sullivan, the director of the Institute of Cancer Policy at King's College in the UK.

Building on his experience in the most recent Gaza war, Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah discussed the challenges facing the humanitarian sector in Gaza between continuously responding to the exigencies of recurrent emergencies and trying to build capacities in a system that is distorted by the complexity of war injuries. The practical imperative of requiring access to Gaza through Israeli controlled crossings and the moral imperative to advocate against the oppressor and bear witness to an illegal siege have forced the humanitarian sector into an uneasy silence around the siege of Gaza, which forces the population to live under inhumane conditions.

**“ Rehabilitation is part of the trauma pathway that is almost always neglected, because all of the money is used in the duration of the war. ”**

The webinar has also explored these competing and contradictory priorities based on first-hand account of working in the Palestinian health sector during these four wars and with the humanitarian sector since the first intifada in 1988.

[WATCH THE WEBINAR](#)

## Research & Ethical Conduct in Conflict Affected Settings Online Workshop

June 2021

As part of the R4HC project (Research for Health in Conflict-Middle East and North Africa region [MENA]), in collaboration with King's College London, the CMP hosted a two-day online workshop. Moderated by Dr. Zahi Abdul Sater, the manager of research programs at GHI, the workshop aimed to expand knowledge in responding to ethical dilemmas faced in conflict settings in MENA region.

Frontline workers, global health researchers, NGOs and practitioners from different disciplines, institutions and career stages participated in the workshop.

The themes discussed included the ethics of research within the ecology of war, the process of obtaining ethical approval, and targeting ethical challenges in research dissemination in conflict settings.



## **CMP Publishes 'Cancer Registration in the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey: Scope and Challenges'**

*July 2021*

The R4HC team in the CMP has recently published a research paper entitled 'Cancer registration in the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey: Scope and Challenges' in the Journal of Global Oncology.

This paper investigates and maps out the present capacities and outputs of cancer registration in the Middle East, North-Africa, and Turkey (MENAT) region and identifies thematic barriers facing implementation and utilization of cancer registry data.

It provides a much-needed understanding of the current landscape and contextual challenges affecting cancer registration in the MENAT, which is important to identify areas on which to focus regional capacity-strengthening initiatives.



## RHP Renews the Training on Refugee and Migrant Health with WHO Eastern Mediterranean Office



In partnership with the World Health Organization Eastern Mediterranean Office (WHO EMRO) office, the Refugee Health Program (RHP) will be giving its 'Training on Refugee and Migrant Health' for two additional sessions throughout 2021. The renewal of this partnership comes following the success of the first training (held in February, 2021), where 40 health experts, researchers, academics, government officials and UN staff members completed the five-day training synchronously through GHI's Academy. The upcoming two sessions are set to take place in September 2021, and December 2021. Applications will open three weeks before the commencement of the training course.

## RHP Holds Week-long Campaign for Refugee Week *June 2021*

In celebration of World Refugee Week (14-21 June) and World Refugee Day (June 21), the Refugee Health Program held a week-long online campaign showcasing refugee women's experiences working under RHP's COVID-19 Refugee Support Program (CRSP).

The CRSP equips local refugee women with the soft skills, capacities and COVID-19 related information through remote training and meetings to serve as focal points within their communities.





## MOBILE UNIVERSITY FOR HEALTH MUH

### MUH Has Delivered More Than 40 Certificates to Syrian and Lebanese Women



The Mobile University for Health (MUH) is an initiative whose main goals are to offset lost chances of education and empower women from the refugee and host communities to become Community Health Workers and thus help rebuild their healthcare systems post-conflict. The three certificates of MUH, which are the Women's Health Certificate

(WHC), the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Certificate (MHPSSC) and the Non-Communicable Diseases Certificate (NCDC), are delivered through state-of-the-art blended learning modalities, which are innovative models for capacity building.

In the past year, MUH has delivered the Women's Health Certificate to two cohorts composed of 30 women from the Syrian and Lebanese communities in different areas in Lebanon. Lastly, GHI MUH delivered the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Certificate to 15 women in Tyre, Lebanon, in collaboration with the Imam Sadr Foundation.

## HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP DIPLOMA HLD

### HLD Has Launched the New Round of Courses in the Third Quarter Of 2021



The Humanitarian Leadership Diploma (HLD) empowers humanitarian practitioners and frontline workers with contextualized knowledge and skills to address humanitarian disasters. The diploma equips practitioners in the humanitarian workforce with the relevant tools, based on the identification of the key competencies needed in the region.

The diploma is comprised of eight courses that are delivered through the GHI's online learning platform GHLAD, allowing learners to virtually interact and share thoughts, ideas and tips regarding humanitarian scenarios, within the context of the courses.

The new round of courses has been launched in the third quarter of 2021, where learners can partake in an asynchronous learning experience, connecting them to a greater number of humanitarian practitioners worldwide.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DIPLOMA](#)

## **Reem Abu Shomar Has Finalized Her Project Report on Antimicrobial Resistance**

*July 2021*

The main goal of the Center for Research and Education on the Ecology of War (CREEW) is to build capacity for research in conflict settings. We are proud to announce that Reem Abu Shomar, a class of 2020 CREEW fellow, has finalized her project report on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and is now preparing her work for publication.

Her project aimed to investigate the presence of AMR bacteria in samples collected from water, wastewater, and hygiene facilities at health care setting in the Gaza Strip in Palestine.

The project yielded quantitative results highlighting the high level of contamination with AMR bacteria in the collected samples.

Her results sheds lights on the deteriorating health infrastructure in conflict and the need to build capacity for safeguarding against AMR at health care facilities.



**CREEW Fellow:  
Reem Abu Shomar**



**Final Report:**  
**Gaza AMR Pilot Study**  
**Anti-Microbial Resistant Bacteria**  
**in Health Care Facilities:**  
**Exploring Links with WASH**

**CLASS OF 2020**

## NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS INITIATIVE NGOi

### NGOi Celebrates Its 2-Year Anniversary with a Series of Engaging Activities

*May 2021*

The month of May 2021 marked the 2nd anniversary for the establishment of the Non-Governmental Organizations initiative (NGOi) at AUB. To celebrate this occasion, NGOi initiated a series of engaging activities on its social media platforms including an invitation for blog contributions addressed to NGOs, with a focus on the role of civil society in responding to crises in Lebanon.

Several blog submissions were featured on the blog in an endeavor to enhance sharing of lessons learnt and success stories among NGOs in Lebanon, which were among the first respondent to the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic crisis, and the Beirut Blast.



### NGOi Re-Offers a 4-day Online Synchronous Course on Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning for NGOs Due to High Demand

*May-June 2021*

As part of its capacity building service, NGOi re-offered its online synchronous course on “Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning for NGOs” due to the high demand and learning needs that NGOs staff exhibited.

This second cohort consisted of more than 75 participants from different organizations of the NGO sector in Lebanon and the region. Despite its virtual delivery, the course was characterized by its engaging approach of sharing knowledge that enhanced the learning experience of the participants. Attendees were engaged in virtual group work sessions as part of the course, with practical examples shared.

The course received remarkable positive feedback from the participants who stressed on the importance and relevance of such trainings to their scope of work.

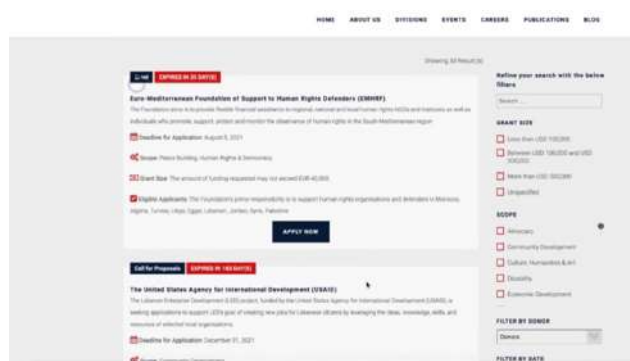
[LEARN MORE ABOUT NGOi COURSES](#)

## NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS INITIATIVE NGOi

### NGOi Upgrades Membership Benefit to Support Member Organizations in Searching for Funding Opportunities More Efficiently

July 2021

To support NGOs that are part of the NGOi Network to search for funding opportunities more efficiently, NGOi launched a new platform as an upgrade to the funding alert shared monthly with its member organizations.



Characterized by its user-friendly interface, the platform allows member organizations to navigate across different open funding opportunities and select the ones that match their preference using multiple filters including scope, amount, funding agency, and deadline.

The monthly funding alert supported by this newly launched platform is among a wide range of benefits that NGOi offers to its member organizations including discounts on training courses and the self-assessment platform, and an exclusive access to certain resources and guides, among others.

[MORE ABOUT THE NGOi MEMBERSHIP PACKAGE](#)



# “South of Global Health” Blog

GHI's blog, 'South of Global Health' encompasses 20 published articles on a variety of intersectional health-related issues. Since its inception, the blog has published articles on refugee health needs, health in Conflict, mental and telemental health, gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual reproductive health, NCDs and health systems. Submitting scholars hail from the American University of Beirut, War Child Holland, Medical Aid for Palestinians, University of Chester, German University of Cairo, Syria Public Health Network, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Lancet Migration, University of Cambridge, University College London and the Research for Health in Conflict Group.

READ ON THE BLOG



The Impact of COVID-19 on Syrian Refugee Children's Mental Health, Access, and Retention to Education in Lebanon

Sarah Ibrahim and Theresa Farhat July 15, 2021



Education and Breastfeeding: Two Inroads into Better Nutrition

Emerson Monks, Harvard University June 8, 2021



Diabetes in Lebanon amid an Explosion, a Pandemic and Political Unrest

Dialeb May 20, 2021



The Importance of Psycho-social Support, Education and Employment After the Beirut Blast

Iriam Sadr Foundation (ISF) May 11, 2021

**SOUTH OF  
GLOBAL  
HEALTH**

South of Global Health blog has an open and ongoing Call for Blog Entries. It accepts pieces between 500 and 1000 words, and adopts footnotes in APA as its referencing style.

Kindly submit all entries at [ghi@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ghi@aub.edu.lb) or [tf18@aub.edu.lb](mailto:tf18@aub.edu.lb) with the subject “South of Global Health Blog Entry”.

## CORE EXPERT PROFILE

### Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah

Plastic & Reconstructive  
Surgeon

The director of the Conflict  
Medicine Program at the  
Global Health Institute



Professor Abu-Sittah is a UK-trained Plastic & Reconstructive surgeon. His background combines the skills and expertise of a field-leading plastic surgeon with academia and interests in humanitarianism. His work has been at the medical frontline of war and reconstructive surgery and management of war wounds in different conflict zones, and have gone on several war surgery missions to Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and South Lebanon.

His research in the CMP has examined the biosocial consequences and psychological manifestations of wounding and trauma in Low-Middle Income countries (LMICs) during conflict situations or in road traffic accidents or other injuries to understand the needs and provide solutions to improve clinical care in these settings and to develop interventions as a result to help mitigate the public health impact of wars.

He is also interested in assessing the long-term burden of injuries in conflict settings and the critical gaps in the current humanitarian response which enables its improvement.

He has published on the treatment of war injuries including a medical text book, "Reconstructing the War Injured Patient" and a forth coming book, "Treating the War Injured child," both published by Springer.

His work was featured by numerous newspapers and media outlets notably La Monde, The Independent, Telegraph, BBC and CNN.

His research partnership represents a strong collaboration between research institutions and operational humanitarian organizations.

He has a track-record in leading UK-funded research projects. He is the co-investigator on the Research Council UK (RCUK) for health in conflict in the MENA and chair CREEW with the Swisscross Foundation. These projects allow evidence-based and contextualized research capacity building to strengthen the health systems in protracted crises. He also serves on the UK's National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) International Funding Committee and sit on the advisory committee of the Global Research Group on Burn Trauma. He is also an Honorary Senior Lecturer at the Center for Blast Injury Studies at Imperial College, London University.

“ In order to truly understand the way that prolonged and intense conflict shapes human health we need to see war not as a temporal event but as a biosphere that the populations living in these conflicts inhabit. ”

*Dr Ghassan Abu Sittah*

# GHI Welcomes New Staff



## **Natally Al Arab, MD, MSC**

*Research Associate, E-Sahha Program*

*"My role is to achieve equitable access to quality health services among the population".*

Natally AlArab is a Medical Doctor who holds the position of Research Associate at the E-Sahha Program (ESP) at GHI. She works on a wide range of research activities related to mobile health and internet-based health services.

Natally holds a Medical Degree from Beirut Arab University and Master's degree in Neuroimaging sciences from the Lebanese University. She is also a SHARP graduate from Scholars in HeAlth Research Program at the American University of Beirut.



## **Razan Badran, ME**

*Associate Coordination Officer, NGOi*

*"I am dedicating my problem-solving skills to empower the NGO sector in the MENA region".*

Razan holds a master's degree in chemical engineering from the American University of Beirut, and she is a public speaking trainer. She previously worked as a course instructor at AlMaaref University teaching public speaking for engineers and chemistry courses. Razan also worked as a research assistant at AUB, developing a program to enhance the communication skills of engineering students. She joined GHI as a coordination officer for the NGOi initiative.



## **Sarah Younes, BA**

*Associate Communication Officer*

*"My goal is to build a successful social media presence that will bring our audience together as a community."*

Sarah is the Communication Associate at the Global Health Institute, she has completed her bachelor's degree in Media and Communication at the American University of Beirut. Sarah works alongside the communication team on managing GHI's social media accounts, organizing and improving the GHI communication strategy as well as creating appealing content on various social media platforms.



## **Lea Sassine, MA**

*Communication Officer*

*"A Good communication strategy makes a team stronger".*

Lea Sassine is the Communication Officer at the Global Health Institute, in charge of managing GHI's social media accounts, creating engaging content on different platforms and implementing communication strategies and campaigns to uphold GHI's image.

Lea holds a Master's degree in "E-Journalism & E-Communication" from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik – Lebanon, in collaboration with the New Sorbonne University Paris 3- France, with a background in journalism and content creating. She is also a registered journalist in the Lebanese Press Syndicate.



# GHI Welcomes New Interns



## **Teresa Nicoli Aldini**

*University of Gothenburg, Sweden*

Teresa Nicoli Aldini holds a bachelor's degree in Political and International Sciences from the University of Bologna (Italy), and is currently pursuing a Master's in Global Health at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden). She joined the internship program to understand how research in Global Health works. During her period at GHI she helped update the Institute's timeline on Covid in Arab countries and collaborated with the Conflict Medicine Project.



## **Reem Wazni**

*American University of Beirut, Lebanon*

Rim holds a master's degree in Microbiology and Immunology and a bachelor's degree in Nutrition and Dietetics from the American University of Beirut. Rim joined the GHI internship program to enrich her knowledge and experience in global health and better understand the health challenges that are mainly emerging from the MENA region.



## **Nora Mahmalji**

*American University of Beirut, Lebanon*

Nora Mahmalji is a holder of BSc in Dietetics and Nutrition with an ambition to pursue a career in public health. Her previous experience in a hospital setting coupled with her diverse community-related volunteer experience drove her to join the GHI's internship program. She wanted to explore how to improve the health outcomes of individuals within the community through creating changes in knowledge, attitude and behavior. Her experience in GHI was primarily focused on researching socio-economic factors that affect overall health outcomes in the MENA region.



The internship program at the Global Health Institute (GHI) aims to enhance global health knowledge and exposure and nurture skills of young individuals interested in embarking on a study, research, or career path in global health.

**APPLY TO THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**



# Words in the LENS

“Let us all be on the right side of history: the side that chooses humanity over despair. The side that stands up for “we the peoples” in today’s world.”

- Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General

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