

ENGAGE INTERNSHIP

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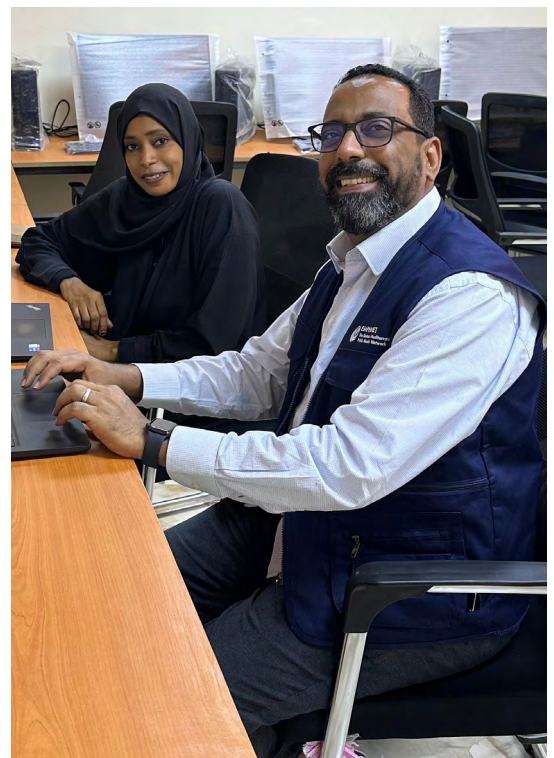
Editor's Letter

Public health thrives on knowledge, practice, and the dedication of those shaping their future. In this issue of the EMPHNET Internship Program "Engage" Newsletter, we celebrate our interns, mentors, and professionals and their contributions to driving impact!

We highlight the journey of Columbia University interns at EMPHNET, the graduation of our latest Engage cohorts for 2024, and the alumni's participation in global public health discussions. This edition also features reflections from first-time mentors, testimonials from former interns, and the launch of EMPHNET's newly accredited internship program, thus reinforcing our commitment to building a skilled, resilient public health workforce.

As we reflect on these milestones, we look ahead with confidence, knowing that the future is in capable hands.

Happy reading!



EMPHNET

The Eastern Mediterranean
Public Health Network

▶ GHD | EMPHNET: working
together for better health

Feature Story

EMPHNET Hosts Columbia University Students: Bridging Knowledge and Practice in Public Health



In the summer of 2024, EMPHNET hosted four master's in public health (MPH) students from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. Their internship at EMPHNET was part of their Applied Practice Experience (APEX). The students' time at EMPHNET provided a unique opportunity for them to apply their academic training to meaningful fieldwork, while addressing critical public health challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and beyond.

The [APEX program](#) bridges classroom knowledge with practical applications. Students gain hands-on experience through supervised projects and contributing significantly to host organizations such as EMPHNET.

EMPHNET's role in hosting these interns underscores its commitment to fostering the next generation of public health leaders.



Exploring Diverse Public Health Challenges

The interns collaborated with different teams within the organization, gaining insights into the region’s pressing health concerns. Each brought their unique perspective and expertise to their respective projects, creating significant value and meaningful contributions.

Roanne Elnogoumi, a Master of Public Health Student specializing in Family and Population Health, divided her time between the Polio and Routine Immunization team and the Research and Policy team. She worked with the Director of the Center of Excellence for Applied Epidemiology (CEAE), Prof. Yousef Khader, and Senior Technical Officer, Ms. Nadine ElHaddad. Her projects included the Pertussis Maternal Immunization initiative and a systematic review of mental health disorders in the region.



Reflecting on her experience, Roanne said:

“The structured mentorship and dynamic projects allowed me to refine my technical skills and contribute meaningfully. EMPHNET’s collaborative environment made this internship truly enriching.”

Abdallah Hassan, a Master of Public Health Student specializing in Health Policy and Management, was mentored by Senior Technical Specialist, Dr. Randa Saad. He worked on noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) within the Zaatari refugee camp. His analysis of survey data and evaluation of Healthcare Community Clinics (HCC) highlighted the intersection of health policy and vulnerable populations.



“My time at EMPHNET significantly enhanced my skills in data analysis and policy recommendation, reinforcing my commitment to global health,” he remarked.

Samiha Reza, a Master of Public Health Student specializing in Population and Family Health, interned with the Public Health Emergency Management Center (PHEMC) under the mentorship of PHEMC’s Director, Dr. Haitham Bashier. During her internship, Samiha focused on emergency management practices.



Samiha emphasized how the program shaped her career aspirations, stating:

“EMPHNET provided real-world practice that brought my academic learning to life. The mentorship pushed me beyond my limits, preparing me to tackle future challenges in public health.”

Talking about Samiha, Dr. Haitham added:

“Samiha’s contributions to our emergency management practices brought fresh insights and innovative ideas.”

Reem Matar, a student in the Advanced Master of Public Health program, worked with the Partnerships and Resource Mobilization team, exploring strategic funding opportunities under the leadership of the Partnership and Resource Mobilization Manager, Ms. Rawan Araj.



“This internship sharpened my skills in research and resource mobilization. The constructive feedback and collaborative environment at EMPHNET have been instrumental in my growth,” Reem reflected.

Mentorship and Support

The interns’ success was supported by EMPHNET’s dedicated mentors, who provided guidance and fostered professional growth.

Dr. Randa highlighted the value of the program saying

“Hosting these talented interns has been a rewarding experience. Their fresh perspectives and enthusiasm brought new energy to our projects.”

Ms. Rawan added:

“It’s inspiring to witness the next generation of public health professionals tackling complex challenges with such determination.”

Fostering Future Leaders in Public Health

EMPHNET’s commitment to nurturing talent aligns seamlessly with the goals of other academic institutions, such as Columbia University.

“By hosting these four exceptional students, we not only advanced EMPHNET’s mission of addressing health challenges in the EMR but also invested in the future of public health leadership. This collaboration is a testament to the power of education and practice coming together to drive meaningful change.”

— Media, Communication, and Networking Team Leader, Ms. Dana Shalabi

Looking ahead, EMPHNET is excited to continue this fruitful partnership and looks forward to hosting more cohorts of talented students from Columbia University, further strengthening the bridge between academic knowledge and practical public health solutions.

“Having mentored several interns over the years, it is always a pleasure to guide and work with such talented and driven individuals. Their fresh perspectives and enthusiasm bring new energy to our projects, and their contributions continue to set a high standard for future collaborations.”

— Director of PHEMC, Dr. Haitham Bashier

Celebrations

Engage Internship Graduation 2024



The Engage Internship Program at EMPHNET proudly celebrated the graduation of Cohorts 3 and 4 for the year 2024, marking another milestone in fostering future public health professionals.

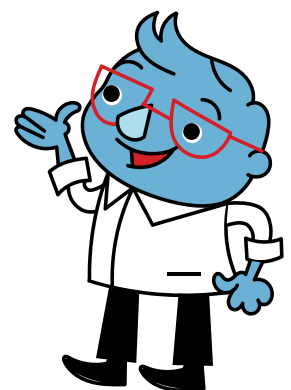
A Journey of Commitment and Impact

Held online on January 29, 2025, the graduation ceremony brought together EMPHNET’s leadership, mentors, program coordinators, and the graduating interns. Director of the Public Health Emergency Management Center (PHEMC), Dr. Haitham Bashier, opened the event with heartfelt remarks, expressing pride in the interns’ growth and the mentors’ dedication to shaping impactful projects.

Team Leader of the Media, Communications, and Networking Unit, Ms. Dana Shalabi, highlighted the vital role of mentorship, noting how interns serve as both learners and inspirations.

Following these remarks, the Communications and Networking Officer and Program Coordinator, Ms. Meral Al-Gunaid, provided an overview of the Engage Internship Program’s growth and impact over the past six years. She then introduced Engage Alumna, Habiba Hisham, who shared reflections on the cohort’s projects, challenges, and lessons learned.

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| 1216+ | <p>Application Received Total application submitted</p> | |
| 117 | <p>Interns Accepted Interns selected for the program</p> | |
| 104 | <p>Program Completed Interns who finished the program</p> | |
| 14 | <p>Hired Interns Interns employed post-completion</p> | |



Interns’ Reflections: Lessons Learned and Achievements

The highlight of the ceremony was the Graduates’ Presentation, where graduates shared insights from their experiences in Workforce Capacity, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization, Media and Communications, One Health, Public Health Emergency Management, and Research and Policy. Despite challenges, they successfully developed technical competencies in epidemiology, communication, and strategic thinking, among other areas, all of which are preparing them for careers in public health.

The Role of Mentors and the Program Team

Mentors played an integral role in the interns’ success. Several mentors shared their insights during the ceremony. Senior Technical Specialist, Dr. Randa Saad encouraged interns to stay curious and maintain their connections post-internship, while Ms. Rawan Araj, who mentored three interns, expressed pride in guiding the next generation.

Senior Technical Officer Dr. Ruba Al-Souri emphasized how mentorship prepares fresh graduates to real-world public health challenges, while Public Health Specialist, Dr. Sayed Himatt praised the program’s structured approach and mutual learning opportunities. He also commended intern Mayada Esmail for her resilience despite being displaced in Sudan. Ms. Dana reiterated that mentorship is a two-way learning experience, benefiting both interns and mentors alike.

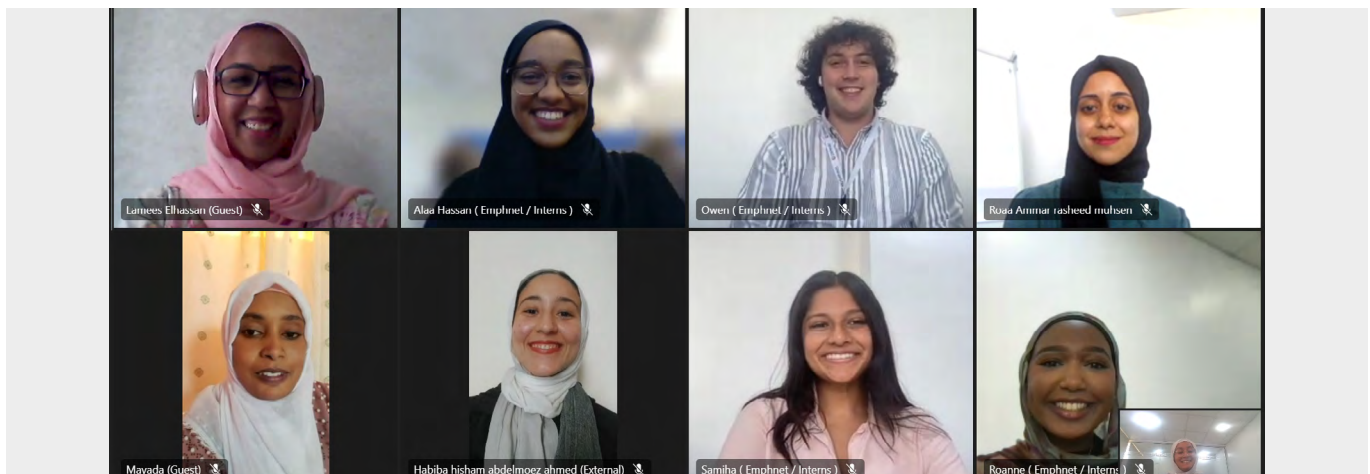
Looking Ahead: A Network of Public Health Leaders

In his closing remarks, Dr. Haitham Bashier emphasized that the Engage Internship Program continues to grow in both scale and quality. He encouraged graduates to stay connected with EMPHNET, turning challenges into opportunities that build resilience.

“All the challenges you faced during this program are stepping stones – each one preparing you for greater responsibilities,” he said.

He concluded, *“To our graduates, congratulations! Thank you for being part of the Engage Internship Program. We look forward to your future achievements.”*

With each graduating cohort, EMPHNET strengthens its mission for advancing public health across the region. Now accredited by the Agency of Public Health Education Accreditation (APHEA), the Engage Internship Program remains committed to developing skilled professionals ready to make a lasting impact.



Spotlight

EMPHNET’s Engage Internship Program Alumni Participate in the Fourth WHO Steering Committee Meeting in Amman



On October 22 and 23, 2024, Amman hosted the Fourth Steering Committee Meeting on National Workforce Capacity for Essential Public Health Functions, bringing together global leaders, technical experts, and early-career professionals to discuss ways to strengthen public health systems worldwide. Hosted by EMPHNET in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the meeting marked a critical step forward in plans to implement a five-year Roadmap to enhance global public health workforce capacity.

Among the attendees were three bright alumni from EMPHNET’s Engage Internship Program: Dr. Bayan Labib, Dr. Mohammad Al-Zoubi, and Ms. Razan Shalabi. These young professionals shared their reflections on the experience they gained by participating in this high-profile global dialogue.



Bayan: A Front-Row Seat to Global Public Health Leadership

“As an alumnus of the Engage EMPHNET Internship Program, attending this meeting was an incredible opportunity for me to engage with global public health leaders,” Bayan reflected. “The discussions on workforce capacity and emergency preparedness deepened my understanding of the critical efforts needed to address public health challenges.”

Bayan shared how the meeting fostered a rich exchange of ideas among experts from diverse professional and cultural backgrounds. “It was inspiring to see the time and energy invested by top experts to develop practical approaches for workforce strengthening. This experience motivated me to think about my role in contributing to workforce capacity and preparedness in public health.”

For Bayan, the networking opportunities were equally valuable. “I connected with public health leaders, gained insights into the profession’s opportunities and challenges, and walked away feeling empowered to contribute to this field.”



Mohammad: A Call to Action for Early-Career Professionals

“When I received the invitation as a former EMPHNET intern, I saw it as an opportunity. By the end of the meeting, I realized it was a calling,” shared Mohammad. “The conference wasn’t just about technical discussions; it was about the human stories behind the data. I witnessed passionate debates and collaborative thinking that shape global health strategies.”

Mohammad noted that his EMPHNET internship had equipped him with the foundational knowledge and skills to actively engage in the meeting. “What seemed like routine tasks during my internship—like compiling research and supporting projects—turned out to be key experiences that prepared me for moments like these.”

Reflecting on the informal yet meaningful dialogues made during coffee breaks, Mohammad said, “I felt heard by global health leaders who genuinely valued young voices. This meeting reinforced why I chose public health: as I wanted to be part of something bigger than myself.”



Razan: Empowered to Shape the Future of Public Health

For Razan, a recent Master’s in Public Health graduate, the meeting was both inspiring and empowering. “It was incredible to witness global collaboration in action, with countries coming together to share ideas and expertise for tackling health challenges.”

The event also offered a unique opportunity for personal growth. “Hearing from seasoned public health leaders gave me a clearer picture of the industry and helped refine my career goals,” she said. “Their passion and encouragement reassured me that I am on the right path.”

Razan credited her preparedness to the Engage Internship Program, which honed her ability to adapt and contribute meaningfully to discussions. “This experience reminded me why I chose public health. It motivated me to channel my energy into workforce development and stronger health systems.”

EMPHNET’s Role in Shaping Public Health Leaders

The Engage Internship Program, a flagship initiative by EMPHNET, bridges the gap between academic knowledge and practical application. By offering interns hands-on experiences, mentorship, and exposure to real-world challenges, the program equips participants to thrive in competitive and dynamic fields.

Engage Alumni, like Bayan, Mohammad, and Razan, embody the program’s mission by contributing to global health strategies and advancing workforce development. Their stories stand as a testament to EMPHNET’s commitment to building a resilient, capable public health workforce that is ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Mentorship Corner

Learning, Leading, and Growing Together

Mentorship is a two-way journey of growth. In this edition, we feature Mr. Rabee Assaf and Dr. Ruba ALSouri, two mentors in EMPHNET's Engage Internship Program, who embraced mentorship with the goal of guiding and inspiring future public health professionals.

Rabee, once an intern himself, stepped into the role of a mentor for the first time, navigating the challenges and rewards of supporting a mentee. Meanwhile, Dr. Ruba, a public health specialist, saw mentorship as an opportunity for mutual learning and professional growth.

From Intern to Mentor: Rabee Assaf's First Mentorship Experience



As part of EMPHNET's Engage Internship Program, Rabee has come full circle—from an intern to mentor. In his first foray into mentorship, Rabee shares both the challenges and growth that came with guiding his mentee, Owen Rozek, through a short but meaningful internship.

The Journey to Mentorship

Rabee's motivation to mentor stemmed from his own positive experience as an intern.

"I benefited a lot as an intern, and I believe in the strength of this program. It's a great opportunity with much to offer, and I wanted to contribute to the continuity of the cycle," he shared.

His goal was to create a balanced relationship where both mentor and mentee could gain and grow — an approach that shaped his mentorship journey.

Guiding Owen: A Cross-Cultural Experience

Rabee mentored **Owen Rozek**, a political science student from the University of Michigan with an interest in public health. Owen joined EMPHNET to enhance his Arabic skills and gain hands-on experience.

His background brought fresh perspectives to the team. Rabee highlighted Owen's cultural awareness and adaptability, which enriched discussions and daily tasks. Owen's contributions ranged from data entry and content development to translation and research, where his ability to think critically stood out.

To enrich Owen's experience, Rabee customized tasks to align with his dual interests in health and politics. He also introduced Owen to Arabic

speakers within EMPHNET, ensuring both professional and personal growth.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

While Rabee found the experience fulfilling, he candidly admitted that he was unprepared for the role, wishing he had approached mentorship with clearer goals and a structured plan.

“I realized how time-consuming mentorship is. I often found myself striving to create meaningful, thought-provoking tasks for my mentee, but at times, I felt I fell short,” he reflected.

Still, he recognized his role in **helping Owen develop organizational and writing skills,**

a valuable takeaway from their mentorship experience.

Advice for Future Mentors

When asked about advice for future mentors, Rabee was straightforward:

“Plan ahead. Take the time to understand your mentee’s potential and give them tasks that push their thinking.”

Through his honest reflection, Rabee emphasizes that mentorship is about mutual growth, learning, and refining one’s approach for future opportunities.

Mentorship: Dr. Ruba Al-Souri’s Journey



As a dedicated public health specialist, Dr. Ruba stepped into the role of mentor with a deep sense of responsibility.

Reflecting on her decision to become a mentor for the first time, Ruba shared,

“I was once in their place, seeking guidance to navigate public health. It’s a field that isn’t

always straightforward, especially for those without a direct background in it. I wanted to provide the support I once needed.”

She saw mentorship as more than just sharing expertise — it was an opportunity to empower young professionals with a win-win situation.

Tailoring Mentorship for Unique Needs

Ruba has mentored three interns—Maya Marrow, Habiba Hisham, and Edward Gharayeb—each with different backgrounds and goals. She emphasized flexibility, tailoring her approach to each mentee’s aspirations.

Her experience with Habiba stands out as particularly rewarding. *“Habiba wasn’t just seeking a certificate; she was fully engaged, proactive, and eager to learn. Watching her grow was incredibly fulfilling.”*

Ruba believes in building trust and maintaining open communication to create a supportive environment where mentees feel valued.

“I make it clear that we’re in this journey together. It’s not about superiority or who is the senior, but all about mutual growth and benefit,” she explained.

Navigating Challenges in Mentorship

Stepping into a mentorship role came with its challenges. For Ruba, balancing her responsibilities as a technical person with the needs of her mentees required careful planning.

“Managing time is crucial, especially when mentoring fresh graduates or undergraduates who need extra guidance to understand the basics of public health,” she noted.

To address this, Ruba held weekly meetings, virtual check-ins, and structured discussions, ensuring mentees remained engaged while learning the realities of public health work.

“Being in constant communication could be time-consuming, but the results are worth it,” she reflected.

The Mentor’s Growth Journey

For Ruba, mentorship is as transformative for the mentor as it is for the mentee.

“Mentorship has improved my communication skills, taught me how to build harmonious relationships, and prepared me for leadership roles,” she shared.

She sees it as a continuous learning process, where guiding others reinforces knowledge and sharpens critical thinking.

“It’s a cycle of learning—teaching someone else refreshes your own knowledge and challenges you to stay sharp.”

Advice for Aspiring Mentors

Ruba encourages those considering mentorship to approach the role with dedication and empathy.

“Mentorship is a responsibility. It’s not about fulfilling your own needs but about focusing on the mentee’s growth. Planning, setting clear objectives, and taking their needs seriously can make a lasting impact on their career and perception of public health.”

Looking Ahead

Ruba remains passionate about mentoring and is eager to continue contributing to the Engage Program and added that

“EMPHNET is a unique platform that offers regional exposure and technical discussions, making it ideal for nurturing future public health leaders.”

Through their experiences, Rabee and Ruba demonstrate that mentorship is more than just guidance—it’s about fostering growth, building confidence, and shaping the future of public health. Their journeys reinforce that mentorship is a continuous cycle of learning, adaptation, and leadership—one that benefits both mentors and mentees alike.



“Interning at EMPHNET expanded my technical skills and deepened my understanding of public health. A highlight was attending the One Health Field Epidemiology Training Workshop in Egypt, a groundbreaking initiative in the region. This experience has fueled my passion for epidemiology and inspired me to contribute to public health in Egypt and beyond.”

– Workforce Capacity Intern,
Habiba Hisham



Announcements

EMPHNET Launches Accredited Public Health Internship Program to Build a Skilled Workforce

EMPHNET is proud to announce the launch of its **accredited Public Health Internship Training Program**, a key component of its flagship **Engage Internship Program**. This innovative initiative bridges the gap between academic learning and real-world public health practice, empowering students and graduates, especially youths and young professionals, with hands-on experience, professional certification, and the skills needed to excel in a competitive job market.

The 12-week program, accredited by the **Agency for Public Health Education Accreditation (APHEA)**, offers a comprehensive curriculum structured around nine public health tracks, including **Polio and Routine Immunization, One Health, Research and Policy, Public Health Emergency Management, and Health Protection and Promotion**, among others. Through practical projects, expert mentorship, and tailored modules, participants gain the tools necessary to address pressing public health challenges in their communities.

“Public health demands professionals who can translate theory into impactful action,” said Dr. Mohannad Al Nsour, Executive Director of EMPHNET. *“This internship program prepares a new generation of skilled individuals who can tackle pressing health issues and contribute to healthier communities.”*

Reflecting on the program’s impact, an Intern shared: *“EMPHNET stands out because it puts a lot of effort into supporting the professional growth of its interns and fosters an environment of continuous learning.”*

Since its inception in 2019, the Engage Internship Program has supported over **80 graduates**, equipping them with critical skills and professional growth opportunities. With the program now incorporating accreditation and professional certification, it helps participants **enhance their employability and ensures their competitiveness**.

By focusing on fostering a competent and skilled public health workforce, the program is poised to make a significant contribution to addressing regional health challenges.

EMPHNET
The Eastern Mediterranean
Public Health Network

Certified to Make a Difference

Engage
Public Health
Internship
Training
Program

Accredited by  **APHEA**
Accredited Continuing
Training & Educational Event

Testimonials



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“Working at EMPHNET has been a remarkable journey, allowing me to delve into the intricate realm of healthcare research. During my tenure, I focused on conducting extensive studies related to meningitis. My work involved in-depth research aimed at understanding its underlying mechanisms, potential treatments, and impact on affected individuals in Jordan and other countries. This experience not only enhanced my research skills but also instilled a profound sense of purpose in contributing to advancements in healthcare.”

*– Disease Control and Prevention Intern,
Yara Al-Hiyari*

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“My mentor, Rawan, played a crucial role in making my experience both rewarding and stimulating. She provided direction and support, helping me navigate my assigned responsibilities and projects. Her guidance not only enhanced my professional development but also made me feel empowered and confident in my work. Additionally, Meral Al-Gunaid fostered a friendly and collaborative environment during our biweekly intern meetings, allowing me to connect with interns from other units.”

*– Partnership and Resource Mobilization Intern,
Malak Alrubaie*

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“Despite the initial challenges of adapting to the unfamiliar environment of public health, my strong passion for the field kept me motivated and eager to learn. One of my primary objectives during the internship was to enhance my translation skills. Under my mentor’s guidance, I discovered that translation requires meticulous text analysis, detailed research, and careful word selection to ensure accuracy and cultural relevance.”

*– Media, Communications, and Networking Intern,
Roa’a Muhsen*

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“My internship experience gave me insight into public health field epidemiology training programs in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. During my internship, I had the opportunity to design healthcare surveys using Epi Info software and summarize comprehensive reports for different FETP workshop programs launched by EMPHNET. I valued my time interning because I became more involved in the public health field and met other interns with similar career interests and goals.”

*– Workforce Capacity Intern,
Maram Kutkut*

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“While the situation in Gaza remains deeply troubling, my experience with EMPHNET instilled in me a sense of hope and resilience. It reaffirmed my belief in the power of collective action and the profound impact that dedicated individuals can have in times of crisis. I am deeply grateful for this transformative experience, which will continue to shape my perspective and guide my future in public health.”

*– Public Health Emergency Management Center
Intern and Current EMPHNET Employee,
Abeer Ismail*

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“My internship was more than just a professional experience; it was a transformative journey. The challenges I encountered, the skills I acquired, and the personal growth I experienced shaped my professional identity.”

*– Media, Communications, and Networking Intern,
Bayan Aljedi*

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“Working across the Capacity Building and Partnership and Resource Mobilization units provided invaluable hands-on experience. I leave with deep gratitude for my mentors, the supportive team, and the connections I built with fellow interns.”

*– Workforce Capacity Intern and Partnership and Resource Mobilization Intern,
Lamees Elhassan*

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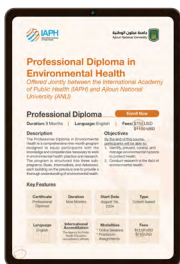
“My experience as a Communication and Media Networking Department intern at EMPHNET has been deeply impactful. Seeing firsthand how effective communication can enhance public health awareness and promote healthier behaviors has strengthened my passion for this field. This experience has been invaluable in shaping my skills and confidence as a public health communicator.”

*– Media, Communications, and Networking Intern,
Ruba Kharisat*

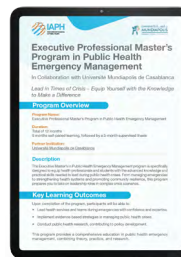
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Updates

From the International Academy of Public Health (IAPH)



Cohort 4
Applications for the Professional Diploma in Environmental Health Program are Now Open!



Cohort 5
Applications for the Executive Professional Master's Program in Public Health Emergency Management are Now Open!

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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