











Profiles of 2025 GACD Masterclass Trainees



Name	Bio
	<p>Bhawana Shrestha is a public health researcher specialising in implementation science for NCDs. She holds an MPH in Epidemiology and is a Fogarty Global Health Fellow (University of Washington). As a Research Project Coordinator at Dhulikhel Hospital, she has led studies on hypertension and gestational diabetes, with expertise in research design, behavioural interventions, and large-scale project management. Bhawana has multiple peer-reviewed publications and is committed to strengthening health systems through evidence-based approaches.</p>
	<p>Dhriti Mittal is a mental health researcher with a Bachelor's and Master's in Psychology from the University of Delhi, India. She develops and evaluates interventions for depression, anxiety, and suicide prevention among adolescents and young people. At Sangath, she works on the It's Ok To Talk and Metropolis projects, enhancing youth mental health support in India. She also authored the DIYouth Advocacy Toolkit, funded by Comic Relief, to empower youth leaders in LMICs. Passionate about making mental health care more accessible, she explores innovative approaches to support young people.</p>
	<p>Dikshya Sharma is a public health professional with specialized training in implementation research from WHO/TDR and five years of experience in research and programme implementation. As Community Health Research Manager at Possible, she oversees IR projects, including the pilot and scale-up of community health programs led by professionalised community health workers. Her expertise spans research design, intervention implementation, data management, and evidence dissemination, working closely with government and academic institutions to promote evidence-based practice.</p>
	<p>Dr. Parasuraman Ganeshkumar is a scientist E in the noncommunicable diseases division at ICMR National Institute of Epidemiology, India. He leads CDC-funded projects on epidemic prevention, disease threat detection, and India's Hypertension Control Initiative. With expertise in epidemiology, research methodology, and biostatistics, he specializes in digital health solutions, community-based research, and health systems strengthening. His key interests include implementation research, NCD epidemiology, and disease surveillance, contributing significantly to India's public health and capacity building.</p>
	<p>Professor Gillian Gould is a public health researcher, tobacco treatment specialist, and GP in refugee health, working to reduce smoking and vaping among First Nations communities in Australia. She is a Professor in Health Equity at Southern Cross University, leading the GACD/NHMRC-funded iSISTAQUIT scale-up project for pregnant First Nations women who smoke and the SISTABIRTH Birthing on Country project. She is the past co-chair of the GACD Lung Diseases Group and Indigenous Populations Working Group and currently serves as Oceania Lead for the Global Implementation Society. Gould identifies as an Indigenous Judean.</p>
	<p>Dr. Kripa S V Shiby is a medical doctor and public health professional committed to tackling non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and strengthening health systems through implementation research. She firmly believes in early intervention as the key to prevention, advocating for proactive strategies to reduce the impact of NCDs. Guided by her motto, "Catch them young, because prevention is always better than cure," she is dedicated to driving meaningful change in public health.</p>

	<p>Dr. John Olawepo, MBBS, PhD, is an Associate Director at the IVAN Research Institute, where he co-leads the ICON-3 Practice-Based Research Network, and an Associate Clinical Professor at Northeastern University, Boston, USA. With over 15 years of experience in implementation practice, research, and program design across the United States and Nigeria, his work focuses on health systems integration, chronic disease epidemiology, and implementation science. He earned his medical degree from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, and completed postgraduate training in Public Health at the University of London, UK, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA.</p>
	<p>Jyotishmita Sarma is a social scientist and qualitative researcher with a Ph. D in Social Sciences in Health. She is currently working as a Project Research Scientist at the Department of Endocrinology & Metabolism, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. Her research interests focus on exploring the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities and chronic illnesses through an intersectional lens, examining their social location and accessibility to healthcare. By integrating qualitative research and evidence-based interventions, her work aims to bridge gaps in healthcare for marginalized populations.</p>
	<p>Professor Lul Raka is a Medical Microbiology and Infection Control expert at the University of Prishtina and a microbiologist at Kosovo's National Institute of Public Health. He leads Kosovo's National Program for Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-Associated Infections and manages an ICARS-funded antimicrobial stewardship project. With a medical degree, PhD, and advanced microbiology training, he contributes to global initiatives through WHO and BSAC. His expertise includes advisory roles during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kosovo and the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, with publications in international journals and academic texts.</p>
	<p>Dr. Judith Waswa is a senior lecturer at the Technical University of Kenya with a PhD in Applied Human Nutrition. With over 10 years of experience, she specialises in global public health, maternal and child health, and sustainable food systems. Currently, she serves as Director of Community Outreach Linkages and Partnerships and work on EU-funded research on obesity intervention in Kenya, Tanzania and Burkina Faso. She holds key positions in various Ministry of Health and Agriculture committees. She actively contributes to national and international health initiatives while mentoring students and promoting girl child empowerment.</p>
	<p>Kalpana Chaudhary is a research project coordinator at Nepal's Institute of Implementation Science and Health, managing the Birth Cohort Study and Gestational Diabetes Project at Dhulikhel Hospital. She holds an MSc in Public Health (Epidemiology) from Kathmandu University (2019) and has experience with JSI's Chlorhexidine Navi Care Program and Nepal Family Health Program II. Her research focuses on implementation science, women's health, NCDs, and geriatric care.</p>
	<p>Dr. Long Le is a health economist and senior research fellow at Monash University's School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine. Previously an Alfred Deakin research fellow, he also held roles at Deakin Health Economics. He holds a B.Pharm (2009), MPH, MHSM (2014), and a PhD in Health Economics (2018). With over 90 publications, he has secured more than A\$13.9M in research funding as a chief/co-investigator.</p>

	<p>Kusumsheela Bhatta holds a Master of Public Health and currently serves as a Public Health Officer at the Ministry of Health, Government of Nepal. Recognised for her academic excellence, she earned top positions in her studies and received three Presidential Gold Medals. She is an early-career researcher with experience as a Research Officer and has worked with various NGOs and INGOs. Her work focuses on empowering young people and addressing health disparities by linking research evidence with policy to create meaningful impacts, particularly in underserved communities.</p>
	<p>Dr. Lana Ray (Anishinaabe-Opwaaganasiniing) is an Associate Professor in health disciplines and Canada Research Chair in Resurgent Methodologies for Indigenous Health at Athabasca University. She co-directs the Anishinaabe Kendaasiwin Institute at Lakehead University and has held leadership roles in the public and non-profit sectors. A past recipient of the Emerging Indigenous Scholar Award at the International Conference on Qualitative Inquiry, her work focuses on Indigenous health, education, systems change, and data sovereignty through resurgent and decolonial praxis.</p>
	<p>Ibrahim Kedir is a researcher at the Ethiopian Public Health Institute and since 2015, he has led major projects like the Ethiopian Service Provision Assessment Survey. He holds an MPH from Addis Ababa University (2011) and has over a decade of experience in health services and research. Passionate about research ethics, he heads EPHI's Research Ethics and Publication Office and serves on its IRB. Currently a PhD candidate at the University of Oslo, his research under the EU-funded ENABLE project focuses on health equity, examining maternal health service inequalities and strategies to reduce NCD risk factors among pregnant women in urban Ethiopia.</p>
	<p>Dr. Kanica Kaushal is an Associate Professor in Clinical Research and Epidemiology at the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, New Delhi. A recognised public health expert, she leads innovative projects and contributes to implementing India's NAFLD guidelines. She actively raises awareness and combats stigma around Hepatitis B through campaigns like EMPATHY, WOMB, SMILES, and IMELD. A prolific researcher with over 60 publications, she also reviews for leading journals. Currently, she oversees four CSR-funded projects and one ICMR project at ILBS, making significant contributions to public health.</p>
	<p>Keonayang Kgotlaetsile is a behavioural scientist from Botswana, Africa, with extensive experience in HIV-related work. Her focus has expanded to improving care for people living with chronic conditions, particularly non-communicable diseases like hypertension, through evidence-based, patient-centred approaches. She is passionate about using implementation science to develop context-appropriate care strategies, conduct training for healthcare professionals, and advocate for systemic reforms in Botswana. Her goal is to enhance the quality of healthcare delivery by fostering collaboration, scaling up NCD programmes, and promoting research that improves health outcomes.</p>
	<p>Mercian Daniel has 20 years of experience in clinical practice, research, program implementation, and teaching from national to global institutions. Based at The George Institute India for over six years, he has worked on large-scale community trials and global mental health studies. His interests include community anti-stigma programmes, lived experiences with mental illness, social determinants of mental disorders, adolescent mental health, climate change and mental health, NCDs, and mental healthcare delivery for marginalised populations.</p>

	<p>Dr. Michaela Riddell is a multidisciplinary scientist specialising in diagnostic techniques, study design, epidemiology, and intervention trials for communicable and non-communicable diseases. Over the past decade, she has managed three RCTs focused on scalable interventions in LMICs. She led the GACD working group in developing consensus measures for NCD implementation projects and the GACD data dictionary to support cross-project analyses. She also contributed to the GACD Hypertension Process Evaluation Guidelines and insights from task-shifting projects.</p>
	<p>Dr. Uday Narayan Yadav is a chronic disease implementation scientist at Yardhura Walani (National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research). He has implemented various public health programs and conducted research in Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Australia focusing on indigenous and other disadvantaged populations. Dr. Yadav has secured competitive external funding of over \$5 million in research grants as lead investigator or collaborator investigator in last five years from Government of Nepal, SABIN Vaccine Institute and Australian Government.</p>
	<p>Dr. Yoko Inagaki, MD, MPH, is a physician-scientist and faculty member at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Previously, she practiced family medicine in rural Japan and served as a WHO consultant in Laos. Her research focuses on task-sharing with non-physician health workers for chronic disease control in LMICs. She leads an NHLBI-funded project in Nepal on community-based NCD risk management and serves on the education committee of APHA's Community-Based Primary Health Care Group.</p>
	<p>Dr. Ikechukwu Anthony Orji is a public health physician with the Abuja Municipal Primary Healthcare Department and an adjunct research fellow at the University of Abuja's Cardiovascular Research Center. He collaborates on GACD and NIH-funded projects under Professor Dike Ojji's leadership. Holding master's-level training in public health and infectious diseases, along with a PhD in public health, he has up to 40 peer-reviewed publications. His research focuses on clinical trials, NCD control particularly hypertension and diabetes using implementation science, and integrating NCD care for people with HIV in primary healthcare settings.</p>
	<p>A/Prof. Natasha (Tash) Howard specialises in public health equity research, using systems-based implementation science to co-create, implement, and evaluate multi-level interventions for holistic health outcomes. She is a fellow of the Public Health Association of Australia, co-chair of the South Australian Implementation Science Network, and Associate Editor of the <i>Public Health Research & Practice</i>. A non-Indigenous researcher, she leads the Implementation Science Program within the Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity Theme at SAHMRI.</p>
	<p>Dr. Tigestu Alemu Desse holds a PhD in implementation and health services research from Deakin University (2023). Previously, he was a Lecturer, Researcher, and Associate Dean at Addis Ababa University. His work focuses on managing complex chronic conditions, particularly CVDs and diabetes, in disadvantaged populations. During his PhD, he co-designed a tailored intervention for diabetes management through collaboration with consumers, healthcare providers, and policymakers. He has worked with the Baker Heart & Diabetes Institute, is an adjunct research fellow at La Trobe University, and remains affiliated with Addis Ababa University. With over 20 publications, he has presented at more than 14 national and international conferences.</p>

	<p>Sonali Kumar is a programme manager and research fellow at the Centre for Mental Health Law & Policy (CMHLP), in Pune, India and a doctoral candidate at the Department of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, Utrecht University focusing on suicide prevention.</p>
	<p>Dr. Ravindra Agrawal, a graduate of Goa Medical College, trained at the Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Goa, and further in the UK and Australia. He leads the psychiatry department at Manipal Hospital, Goa, and founded the multidisciplinary Antarman Centre. As a project lead at Sangath, he focuses on community mental health, lay-delivered psychological treatments, and adolescent mental health across Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Goa. His interests include community mental health, perinatal depression, digital psychiatry, and resilience.</p>
	<p>Dr. Subitha L., MBBS, MD, DNB, is an Additional Professor in the Department of PSM at JIPMER, Puducherry, and Associate Dean for Research. She has over 15 years of teaching experience and has led multiple research projects, including community-based physical activity programs, a primary healthcare diabetes registry, and a study on the impact of nutrition on tuberculosis. She also works on NCDs and digital health interventions. With around 90 publications in national and international journals, her expertise spans NCDs, health promotion, public health advocacy, and medical education.</p>
	<p>Dr. Mogan K.A., a public health professional from Tamil Nadu, holds an MD in Community Medicine with expertise in research and education. He served as a faculty member at the ICMR-NIE Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) in Chennai for two years, bringing valuable field experience. Trained in quality improvement, he has coordinated surveillance system evaluations for malaria in Chhattisgarh alongside FETP scholars. His interests include fieldwork, outbreak investigations, and public health interventions.</p>
	<p>Dr. Ramya Nagarajan is a scientist at ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology and a medical doctor with an MD in Community Medicine. She serves as a faculty member and course coordinator for Field Epidemiology Training Programs at ICMR-NIE. Her research interests include non-communicable diseases, with a special focus on mental health, implementation research, and evidence synthesis. Dr. Ramya is actively involved in various implementation research projects addressing hypertension, diabetes, and mental health, contributing to evidence-based public health strategies.</p>
	<p>Dr Nisha K Jose is a medical scientist- E, at Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Headquarters, New Delhi. She has her MBBS and MD in Community Medicine from St. John's Medical College, Bangalore, India and DNB from National Board of Exams, New Delhi and Diploma in Medical Law and Ethics from National Law School of India University. She has worked as Surveillance Medical Officer with World Health Organization and Associate Professor at Amala Institute of Medical Sciences, Kerala, India. Her research field encompasses oncology and medical ethics.</p>

	<p>Dr. Melinda Chelva is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto, Canada. Her PhD research focused on advancing and evaluating the implementation of cervical cancer screening programs in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. Through comprehensive fieldwork, Dr. Chelva explored women’s knowledge and awareness of HPV and cervical cancer, uncovering key barriers and facilitators to improving prevention efforts using an implementation science approach. Currently, she collaborates with a team of international partners to develop and implement a capacity-building program designed to enhance the timely referral and management of childhood cancer cases across Western Africa.</p>
	<p>Akshay P K is a public health professional and Program Coordinator at the Centre for Chronic Disease Control, New Delhi. He holds an MPH and a BSc in Medical Laboratory Technology from JIPMER. With experience in chronic disease control and health system strengthening, he has worked on GACD-funded projects and community-based research. Previously, he contributed to infectious disease research at JIPMER and SCTIMST, Trivandrum. His expertise includes capacity building, data-driven decision-making, and field operations management. Akshay has published on chronic disease management and community health and collaborates with government and academic institutions to improve healthcare systems and promote sustainable public health interventions.</p>