

CELEBRATING THE

**10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

FHI 360 - UNC GILLINGS SCHOOL  
OF GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH  
FELLOWSHIP

2005–2015

## **FHI 360 – UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health Fellowship Program – Past and Incoming Fellows**

### ***Past Fellows***

Anu Manchikanti Gomez	(2005-2006)
Suja Rajan	(2006-2007)
Katie Kurkjian	(2006-2007)
Sara Forhan	(2006-2007)
Lisa Parker	(2007-2008)
Stephanie Wheeler	(2007-2008)
Heather Marlow	(2008-2009)
Kate Clouse	(2008-2009)
Kate P. Gilles	(2008-2009)
Lisa Albert	(2009-2010)
Elizabeth Greene	(2009-2010)
Kerry Brewer	(2009-2010)
Juliana Thornton	(2009-2010)
Siobhan Young	(2010-2011)
Kumi Smith	(2010-2011)
Angie Bengston	(2011-2012)
Chinelo Okigbo	(2011-2012)
Paul Fleming	(2012-2013)
Jennifer Velloza	(2012-2013)
Angela Parcesepe	(2013-2014)
Alexis Dennis	(2013-2014)
Emily Mangone	(2014-2015)
Smisha Agarwal	(2014-2015)

### ***Incoming Fellows***

Amelia Mackenzie	(2015-2016)
Christine Kim	(2015-2016)
Giuliana Morales	(2015-2016)

## ***Past Fellows: Where Are They Now?***

### **Anu Manchikanti Gomez (2005-2006)**

Anu Gomez was one of the first students to receive the UNC-FHI 360 fellowship in 2005-2006. She completed the fellowship in her first year as a doctoral candidate in maternal and child health.

Gomez is now an assistant professor at the School of Social Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley. Her research which focuses upon equity in sexual and reproductive health, examines the decision-making process of contraceptive use among young women of color, and the relationship between abortion and depression during adolescence.

During the fellowship, Anu worked on two peer-reviewed publications. She credits that experience to building her self-confidence to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals. Now that she is an educator and mentor herself, she draws upon her experiences from FHI 360 to advise her students.

“The mentoring I received at FHI 360 informs the ways that I now support students as they develop their own research interests,” Anu said.

### **Suja Rajan (2006-2007)**

Suja Rajan was one of the first students to receive the FHI 360 fellowship a decade ago. These days, she can be found in Houston, teaching health economics to students in the University of Texas School of Public Health Department of Management Policy and Community Health.

Suja largely credits her understanding of applied epidemiology concepts to her work and reading at FHI 360. Through the fellowship, she published two articles in epidemiology journals. Dr. David Sokal was a key mentor to Suja and taught her how to apply fundamental epidemiology methods when data and funds are scarce- as they often are in public health.

“I learned that we do not need unlimited resources, funds and data in order to do quality research,” Suja says. “I would love to have stayed back and work with FHI 360.”

“The FHI 360 fellowship was the best experience I had as a graduate student.”

### **Katie Kurkjian (2006-2007)**

Katie Kurkjian was an FHI 360 fellow in 2006-2007. Currently, she is a CDC Career Epidemiology Field Officer assigned to the Virginia Department of Health in Richmond, Virginia. In this role, she works to build epidemiology capacity for public health preparedness and response.

As an FHI fellow, Katie worked on developing agendas for potential research on avian influenza and HIV and co-authored a paper on HIV prevention strategies. She credits the fellowship as an invaluable complement to her epidemiology training at UNC.

Katie said that the hands-on mentoring and training provided by Mr. Gary West and other members of the FHI team was extraordinary. “This was a huge opportunity to work with and learn from researchers who are designing and implementing studies that influence public health policies around the world.”

### **Sara Forhan (2006-2007)**

Dr. Sara Forhan is an epidemiologist and U.S. board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist working for the Division of Global HIV/AIDS (DGHA) at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Her professional focus is on HIV care and support-related work, especially reproductive issues for HIV-infected women, including cervical cancer prevention and family planning/HIV integration.

Dr. Forhan’s cervical cancer prevention work includes technical assistance to President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)-supported countries, with emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, and on policy regarding cervical cancer screening and treatment for HIV-infected women. She has provided cervical cancer prevention consultation to Ministries of Health and CDC in-country staff in numerous sub-Saharan African countries, is a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) expert committee that wrote the recently published second edition of WHO’s international cervical cancer screening and treatment guidelines and policy, and gives ongoing technical assistance to the Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon Initiative, a public-private partnership addressing cervical and breast cancer in low-resource countries.

Before joining DGHA in 2009, she was a CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service Fellow in the Division of STD Prevention at CDC Atlanta, where her primary research centered on sexually transmitted infections among female adolescents in the U.S.

“The first-class mentoring and hands-on experience in public health project development I received during my FHI 360 fellowship have been invaluable in my career.”

### **Lisa Parker (2007-2008)**

Lisa Parker is a FHI 360 fellow from 2007-2008. As is true for many FHI 360 Fellows, Lisa embodies the local/global spirit of the FHI 360 partnership with UNC’s school of public health. She is a locally based consultant for the Durham office of the global firm, Futures Group.

The FHI 360 fellowship influenced her career and research interests in global health. She oversees a large project that provides technical support for measure and evaluation capacity-building programs targeting orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria and Cameroon. She also designs operations research and evaluation studies, including a HIV/Core qualitative retrospective evaluation of a community savings group intervention in Haiti.

Although the FHI 360 fellowship provided Lisa with numerous opportunities for gaining new skills and experiences, she believes her mentorship experience with Dr. Amy Corneli was the most valuable component of the fellowship.

“The FHI 360 fellowship experience helped to shape me into an effective global health researcher,” she says.

### **Stephanie Wheeler, PhD (2007-2008)**

Dr. Wheeler was a 2007-2008 UNC-FHI 360 fellow. She teaches health policy and management in the Gillings School and is a researcher at the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Sheps Center for Health Services Research and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Most of Wheeler's research focuses on cancer outcomes, vulnerable populations, health disparities and medical decision-making.

Wheeler says that the fellowship taught her how to prepare reports and manuscripts and bolstered her skills in analyzing qualitative data. During her fellowship, she had the opportunity to live and work in Rwanda for a summer.

"It was an outstanding research experience that taught me how important the socio-political context is for public health programming," she said.

Wheeler says that she often shares with her own students experiences she had in the fellowship program with her mentors Theresa Hoke and Jessica Price.

## **Heather Marlow (2008-2009)**

Marlow was a 2008-2009 UNC-FHI 360 fellow. Now a senior research and evaluation advisor for Ipas, a global non-governmental organization committed to the elimination of preventable deaths and disabilities from unsafe abortion. Marlow monitors and evaluates the Ipas Ghana program. She also researches women's knowledge about medical abortions in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

During her fellowship, Marlow published manuscripts conducting qualitative and quantitative data analysis on FHI 360 data from a microbicides trial in India.

She believes one of the best parts of the fellowship was the opportunity to work closely with Betsy Tolley.

"Betsy was a great mentor to me during my fellowship," Marlow said.

She also has been a supportive colleague beyond the fellowship and helped me find my first job after I finished my doctor of philosophy, Marlow said.

## **Kate Clouse (2008-2009)**

Kate Clouse is a FHI 360 fellow from 2008-2009. She is a research assistant professor of medicine at the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health. Kate conducts operational research of HIV and TB programs in South Africa. Much of her work focuses on patient retention in HIV care. Through the FHI 360 Fellowship, she was able to work in Johannesburg, South Africa, for three months. The experience left an indelible mark on her research and career path.

“The experience allowed me to explore issues related to provider-initiated HIV testing in a real-world setting,” she says. “This experience also provided some of my first exposure to issues related to broken linkages to continuous HIV care in the primary care setting.”

## **Kate P. Gilles (2008-2009)**

Gilles, a 2008-2009 UNC-FHI 360 fellow now works in policy communications for population, family planning and reproductive health at the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C. There, she aims to bridge the gap between research and policy by developing policy briefs, multimedia presentations and infographics that promote evidence-based policy making.

Gilles says that the fellowship was hugely important to her learning and growth as a public health professional.

“My work with Dominic Shattuck, Greg Guest, Brad Kerner and Miriam Hartmann on the Malawi Male Motivators study was hugely influential to my interests as well as my skills,” Gilles said.

“I was thrilled to be given meaningful assignments that required critical thought and analysis, often for projects that were breaking new ground.”

Gilles said that she also gained confidence and leadership skills through the fellowship.

## **Lisa Albert (2009-2010)**

Albert is a 2009-2010 UNC-FHI 360 fellow. After completing the fellowship, she worked in South Africa and now has returned to the Gillings School as a doctoral student.

In South Africa, Albert monitored and evaluated a clinical trial that studied the role of conditional cash transfers in reducing HIV infection among South African adolescent girls. The cash transfers are given to the girls as long as they stay in school.

Albert continues to work on the conditional cash study as a research assistant in the epidemiology department.

During the fellowship, Albert worked on a participatory community-based HIV prevention research project targeting the black community in Durham, N.C. She believes this unique experience taught her how to implement a participatory research project.

“This was a special project in that the primary investigator realized that scientists and researchers do not always have the right answers to addressing community health issues,” Albert said.

She said that the participation of community members as decision makers and leaders on the research project made the study innovative.

### **Elizabeth Greene (2009-2010)**

Greene is a 2009-2010 UNC-FHI 360 fellow, she didn't travel around the world to conduct her research. Like many fellows, she works locally on global health issues.

A clinical research manager for the HIV Prevention Trials Network at FHI 360, Greene manages the development and implementation of the trials, collaborating with leading scientists and experts in the field of HIV prevention.

Through the fellowship, Greene established relationships with many colleagues at FHI 360. She says the fellowship led her to her current job.

Greene believes the fellowship offered her the invaluable opportunity for hands-on learning with research methodologies.

### **Kumi Smith (2010-2011)**

Smith is a 2010-2011 UNC-FHI 360 fellow, and is now at Johns Hopkins University working on epidemic modeling of HIV and Hepatitis C among men who have sex with men and injection drug users in India.

Through the fellowship, Smith said she gained experience in writing and managing research grants. The fellowship also furthered my interest in prevention science, she said.

As is true for many of the fellows, Smith maintains contact with her mentors from the fellowship.

"Betsy Tolley and Theresa Gamble are still my go-to mentors for advice on careers and training," she said. Smith said they are both among the most supportive and thoughtful people I've ever worked with, and I trust them completely.

### **Angie Bengston (2011-2012)**

Bengston, a UNC-FHI 360 fellow in 2011-2012, currently is a doctoral student in epidemiology at the Gillings School.

Her research focuses on HIV and pregnancy in low- and middle-income countries. Her dissertation is on the association between antiretroviral therapy and adverse pregnancy outcomes.

Bengston believes the fellowship gave her a great opportunity to grow as a researcher by allowing her to lead manuscripts and present her work at international conferences.

"Working with behavioral and clinical scientists enriched my ability to examine public health issues from a variety of perspectives," she said.

Bengston credits Kelly L'Engle and Charlie Morrison from FHI 360 with helping her hone her analysis and manuscript development skills.

## **Chinelo Okigbo (2011-2012)**

Okigbo is a 2011-2012 UNC-FHI 360 fellow and a fourth-year doctoral maternal and child health student at the Gillings School. She is a graduate research assistant on the Measurement, Learning and Evaluation (MLE) project at the Carolina Population Center. The MLE Project evaluates the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded Urban Reproductive Health Initiative, which strives to improve modern contraceptive use in urban areas in Kenya, India, Nigeria and Senegal.

Okigbo says that the fellowship gave her an opportunity to apply skills she learned in the classroom to her work place.

“I gained project management, leadership, research and time-management skills, all of which are crucial to a successful career,” she said. “My decision to work in a non-profit organization post-graduation was shaped by my experiences during the fellowship at FH I360.”

## **Paul Fleming (2012-2013)**

Paul Fleming is a FHI 360 fellow from 2012-2013. Paul is a doctoral candidate in health behavior who will graduate May 2015. Paul’s dissertation focuses on social factors that influence men’s sexual behaviors in the Dominican Republic. He also works on a project with Latino men in the Triangle, examining social and structural factors that shape immigrant men’s health. Through the fellowship, Paul learned complex analytic techniques and fine-tuned his quantitative data analysis skills. Overall, he believes that the fellowship broadened his understanding of global health research methods.

“The fellowship at FHI 360 gave me access to mentors who helped shape who I am as a researcher,” Paul says.

Paul continues to consult with his mentors from FHI 360 and says they give a “great additional perspective” to his work.

“FHI 360 has great people who were always interested in making sure that I was learning or growing as a new scholar.”

## **Jennifer Velloza (2012-2013)**

Velloza, a UNC-FHI 360 fellow in 2012-2013, now works in Vienna, Austria, in the evaluation unit for Medecins Sans Frontieres, (Doctors without Borders). She studies how antibiotic use and health-seeking behavior impact antibiotic resistance among hospital patients over 18 years old and health promoters in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Velloza credits the fellowship with enhancing her research skills and exposing her to global sexual and reproductive health research. She enjoyed the flexibility and independence the fellowship allowed her, especially in terms of her ability to contribute to manuscripts and learning new research skills.

“Overall, the research experience and mentorship I received at FHI 360 prepared me very well for a doctoral degree, and I am currently applying to doctoral programs,” Jennifer said.

## **Angela Parcesepe (2013-2014)**

Parcesepe is a 2013-2014 UNC FHI 360 fellow, now a doctoral student in maternal and child health at the Gillings School. Her research interests include gender-based violence, mental health, and HIV prevention and treatment.

Parcesepe's current work focuses on the intersection of gender-based violence, substance use and HIV prevention.

Parcesepe believes the fellowship strengthened her data analysis skills and provided her with additional training in epidemiology, biostatistics and behavioral science theory and research. The fellowship also expanded her knowledge of HIV risk and transmission among high-risk populations.

Like so many of the fellows, she says that she benefited greatly from the support of her mentors, Drs. Pai Lien Chen and Kelly L'Engle.

## **Alexis Dennis (2013-2014)**

Dennis, a 2013-2014 UNC-FHI 360 fellow, is a research associate at the Duke Global Health Institute, where she coordinates the Social and Behavioral Sciences Core at the Duke Center for AIDS Research. She's also involved in project management, data analysis and manuscript preparation.

She primarily works on two psychological interventions implemented in Tanzania and South Africa. The study in Tanzania helps women rejoin their communities after having fistula repair surgery. The South African study aims to help women who are newly diagnosed with HIV and have histories of sexual trauma to improve their engagement with HIV care.

Like so many of the fellows, Dennis believes the fellowship allowed her to be a competitive candidate for her current job.

"At FHI 360, I was able to gain firsthand experience with conducting research in a global setting," she said.

Dennis says the mentoring aspect was her favorite part of her fellowship experience.

"I am still collaborating with one of my mentors to submit a manuscript that I began working on during my fellowship, and I look forward to continued collaboration with them in various ways as I progress through my career," she said.

## **Emily Mangone (2014-2015)**

Mangone is a 2014-2015 UNC-FHI 360 fellow and a current doctoral student in health policy and management at the Gillings School.

She works on multiple projects at FHI 360, something that she says keeps things very interesting. Mangone's research interests are sexual and reproductive health decision-making, innovative mobile/technological approaches to health, and global family planning and contraception use.

She says that the fellowship gives her tangible skills in network analysis, mHealth content and ArcGIS.



The fellowship also provides many occasions to network.

“I have met several key mHealth leaders at the World Health Organization,” Mangone said. “The mentorship and opportunities have been fantastic.”

## **Smisha Agarwal (2014-2015)**

Agarwal is a 2014-2015 UNC-FHI 360 fellow, now a pre doctoral trainee at the Carolina Population Center.

Her research focuses on the evaluation of large-scale maternal and child health programs that use mobile tools to deliver health care.

As a fellow, Agarwal works on two projects. In one, she analyzed data from a study based in Tanzania to determine how mobile-based job aids affected the quality of health workers’ family counseling services. In the second, she helps a study promote use of mobile tools in strengthening health systems in Burundi.

Agarwal believes the fellowship provides an excellent opportunity to work closely with a mentor as well as other skilled and committed team members.

She said she values the mentoring because it allows plenty of room to take initiative and work independently with guidance, but also provides excellent guidance when needed.

“Despite being very busy, folks at FHI 360 are open and welcoming to this ‘Fridays-only’ team member. They always make time to meet me if more guidance is needed,” Agarwal said.