

ARADHANA THAPA, MPH, PHDc

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Global health researcher and organizational leader with 10+ years of experience spanning **health-system design, implementation research, digital health, community-based care, and cross-sector partnerships in low-resource settings**. Currently focused on the evaluation of AI and large language models for health, with expertise in **human-centered design, safety, user engagement, and evaluation frameworks** for sensitive health contexts.

Former senior leader of a large community healthcare program in rural Nepal, with experience leading multidisciplinary teams, managing complex health-service delivery, partnering with government and academic institutions, and translating evidence into organizational strategy and public-sector scale. Brings together **research rigor, real-world health-system experience, partnership development, and organizational leadership** to evaluate emerging technologies and shape the safeguards, frameworks, and governance needed for responsible use.

CORE EXPERTISE

AI & Digital Health: LLM evaluation, Human-centered design, AI safety, User engagement

Global Health & Research: Implementation Science, Mixed-methods research, Research Design, Community Health systems, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Evidence generation, Health equity

Partnerships & Leadership: Strategic partnerships, Government engagement, Academic collaboration, Organizational strategy, Team leadership, Program design, Governance, Stakeholder engagement

KEY EXPERIENCES

Emory University, USA

Phd Researcher, Global Health and Development | 2022 - Current

- Conduct research at the intersection of AI and global health with a focus on **real-world deployment and safety**.
- Evaluate an LLM-based sexual and reproductive health chatbot through **mixed-methods research**, examining user engagement, intent, safety, and the real-world conditions that shape responsible AI use.
- Translate research findings into practical recommendations for **safer technology deployment, organizational decision-making, and community-centered implementation**.
- Conducted a qualitative study with 17 global health professionals across South Asia, Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and multi-country programs to examine real-world adoption of generative AI/LLMs, including motivations, implementation barriers, safety risks, evaluation approaches, and the organizational and infrastructural factors shaping responsible deployment.
- Contributed to research-practice partnerships examining LLM evaluation as a sociotechnical process, bringing together technical, clinical, social, cultural, and community perspectives.

- Conducted mixed-methods research with global health and community partners on gender-based violence prevention and response in Nepal.

Center for AI in Reproductive Health (CAIRE) Fellow | 2026

- Selected for an interdisciplinary fellowship focused on **AI, reproductive health, health equity, and community-engaged research**.
- Investigate the safety and equity of **LLM-powered chatbots for sexual and reproductive health in low-resource settings**, using real-world user interactions from a community health partnership in India.
- Develop a **taxonomy of high-stakes SRH scenarios** and evaluate chatbot responses against global SRH guidelines, digital health safety standards, and national clinical protocols, with attention to accuracy, empathy, contextual appropriateness, and escalation.
- Translate findings into **safety response guidelines and evaluation frameworks** to support safer, more ethical, and contextually grounded use of generative AI in sensitive healthcare settings.

Possible, USA | Nepal

Advisor, Community Healthcare | 2021 – Present

- Advise organizational and public-sector partners on **community health-system strategy, implementation research, and digital tools for community health workers**.
- Serve as a thought partner in collaboration with Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population on the design and evolution of community health programs.
- Contribute to implementation research designed to generate evidence for improving and scaling community-based health delivery.
- Support global advocacy and evidence translation through research on community health worker systems, including a systematic review of dual-cadre CHW programs published in *The Lancet Global Health*.
- Bridge research, implementation, government priorities, and organizational strategy to inform health-system decision-making.

TUNAFASI, Netherlands | Global

Digital Health & Research Lead | 2023 – Present

- Lead **digital health, research, and scale strategy**, drawing on experience in health-system strengthening, community-based care, digital innovation, and AI in global health.

Advise on the evaluation and scale-up of locally led health-system innovations, with a focus on **evidence, sustainability, and local ownership**.

- Support learning and evidence generation across programs, translating implementation experience and evaluation findings into organizational strategy and decisions about scale.
- Contribute to partnerships and knowledge products that advance **community-led health systems and more equitable approaches to international development**.

CARE, USA

Global Health Research Intern | 2024

- Developed a research agenda and action plan addressing priority challenges faced by **frontline female community health workers**.
- Conducted rapid evidence reviews and synthesized findings to inform research priorities for Health Equity & Rights teams.

- Translated evidence across research and practitioner audiences to support organizational decision-making.

Montreal Behavioral Medicine Center/ University of British Columbia, Canada

Summer Student Scholar, iCARE Study | 2023

- Analyzed global datasets to investigate **inequities in noncommunicable diseases** and inform global health research.

Nyaya Health Nepal / Possible | Nepal

Director- Healthcare Design | 2019-2020

Director- Community Healthcare | 2017-2019

Community Impact Manager | 2016-2017

- Served on the senior leadership team of a health organization delivering care in underserved rural Nepal through **two district hospitals and a digitally enabled community health worker program**, with 300+ staff, an approximately \$5M annual operating budget, and services reaching more than 250,000 people.
- Led the strategic design and evolution of the organization's healthcare delivery model, integrating **community-based care, digital systems, implementation research, and public-sector partnerships**.
- Directed a community health program spanning nine remote municipalities and 100+ staff, with approximately \$1M annual budget and services reaching more than 250,000 people.
- Led implementation of a Ministry of Health-partnered community health model that contributed to improvements in maternal and child health, including a **30% increase in institutional birth rate** following implementation.
- Partnered with the Ministry of Health, municipal governments, researchers, and academic institutions to evaluate, adapt, and scale health interventions.
- Helped develop and implement a **Type II hybrid effectiveness-implementation study** evaluating a digitally supported CHW intervention for reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health.
- Led and supported research collaborations spanning reproductive health, noncommunicable disease, mental health, human resources for health, health financing, and health-system strengthening, contributing to **20+ peer-reviewed publications** across the broader program portfolio.
- Used evidence from implementation and health-system research to inform organizational strategy, government engagement, and pathways to public-sector scale.
- Managed implementation research for a collaborative care model for mental health in a resource-constrained rural setting.
- Leveraged electronic health record data to inform program performance and organizational decision-making.

University of Washington, USA

Continuing Education Specialist, Department of Global Health | 2015-2016

Teaching Assistant, Department of Global Health | 2015

Global Opportunities (GO) Health Fellow for Research Study | 2014

Practicum- Course Evaluation, Department of Global Health

- Managed delivery and evaluation of a leadership and management course serving **1,000+ mid-career health professionals from 20+ low- and middle-income countries**.

- Designed and conducted a prospective cohort study of post-abortion contraceptive use among 220 women in Nepal in partnership with government and nonprofit health providers.
- Provided quantitative and qualitative evaluation of an international online health leadership course.

Karuna Foundation, Netherlands | Nepal

Consultant | 2014

Program Officer | 2010 – 2013

- Led community-based health and disability initiatives in partnership with communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders.
- Spearheaded implementation of a community-based health insurance initiative across two districts, securing government and partner resources and achieving enrollment of approximately **one-third of households**.
- Supported evaluations of program effectiveness, sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and replicability.
- Contributed to national policy and advocacy initiatives related to disability accessibility and health insurance.
- Supported cost-effectiveness analysis of a community-based disability prevention and rehabilitation program.

LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE SERVICES:

Board Member, Sambhav Nepal | 2022–2024

Research institution focused on translating evidence into policy and practice in Nepal.

Treasurer, Laney Graduate Student Council, Emory University | 2023–2024

National Commissioner, The Lancet Global Health Commission on High-Quality Health Systems, Nepal | 2018

SELECTED AI & GLOBAL HEALTH RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS:

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| 2026 | Deva R, Thapa A , Shah M, Mehta M, Jalota S, Karusala N., Ismail A., LLM Evaluation as Sociotechnical Practice: Experiences from a Research-Practice Partnership in Community Health, Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency (FAccT) 2026. <i>Upcoming</i> . |
| 2026 | Dey, S.K., S, M., Thapa, A. , Shah, M., Mehta, Z., Kapile, S.K., Divate, T., Jalota, S. and Ismail, A., 2026. Understanding User Intent in Code-Mixed Sexual and Reproductive Health Queries in Urban India: Hierarchical Classification Approach Using Large Language Models. <i>Journal of medical Internet research</i> , 28, p.e86545. |
| 2023 | Ballard, M., Olaniran, A., Iberico, M., Rogers, A., Thapa, A. , Cook, J., Aranda, Z., French, M., Olsen, H.E., Haughton, J. and Lassala, D. (2022). Community Service or Labour Exploitation? A Systematic Review of 'Dual Cadre Community Health Worker Programmes'. <i>The Lancet Global Health</i> , 11 (10), e1598-e1608. |
| 2023 | Tiwari, A., Thapa, A. , Choudhury, N., Khatri, R., Sapkota, S., Wu, W. J., ... & Maru, S. (2023). A Type II hybrid effectiveness-implementation study of an integrated CHW |

intervention to address maternal healthcare in rural Nepal. PLOS Global Public Health, 3(1), e0001512.

- 2018 Maru, S., Nirola, I., **Thapa, A.**, Thapa, P., Kunwar, L., Wu, W. J., ... & Naresh, K. C. (2018). An integrated community health worker intervention in rural Nepal: a type 2 hybrid effectiveness-implementation study protocol. Implementation Science, 13(1), 53.
- 2018 Citrin, D., Thapa, P., Nirola, I., Pandey, S., Kunwar, L. B., Tenpa, J., ...**Thapa, A** & Raut, A. (2018). Developing and deploying a community healthcare worker-driven, digitally-enabled integrated care system for municipalities in rural Nepal. In Healthcare (Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 197-204). Elsevier.
- 2016 Vaughn K, and **Thapa A** (2015). Cost-effectiveness of a community based rehabilitation programme in Nepal. Disability, CBR and Inclusive Development Journal, V. 26, n.4, p. 5-25, Feb 2016.
- 2018 **Thapa A**, Schwarz R, Chaudhary P (2018). Embracing global standards for community health care on Nepal's path towards universal health coverage, Lancet Global Health Blog.

EDUCATION

PhD candidate, Global Health and Development, Emory University, USA | Expected December 2026 | Advisor: Dr. Azra Ismail

Global Health Effectiveness, Harvard University, USA | 2017

Master of Public Health – Leadership, Policy and Management in Global Health, University of Washington, USA | 2015

Bachelor of Public Health, Purbanchal University, Nepal | 2009

SELECTED HONORS

Mariam K. Chamberlain Dissertation Awards, USA | 2026

Best Dissertation Proposal. Department of Biomedical Informatics, Emory University | 2026

Center for AI and Reproductive Health (CAIRE) Fellowship, Emory University | 2026

PEO Peace Scholarship, USA | 2023-2024

The Laney Graduate School Fellowship, Emory University | 2022-2027

The School of Public Health Endowed Fellow, University of Washington | 2014

Global Health Fellow, University of Washington | 2014

Languages

Proficient in English, Nepali, and Hindi