Position Title: Research Assistant

Project: Landscape Analysis of Nutrition for School-Aged Children and Adolescents in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Location: Remote (occasional in-person meetings)

Duration: 10-15 hours a week, for up to 12 months

Principal Investigator: Prof. Wafaie Fawzi, Richard Saltonstall Professor of Population Sciences, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

About the project: The MENA region faces a growing triple burden of malnutrition, with high rates of undernutrition, overweight, obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies among school-aged children and adolescents. Social, economic, and environmental factors, including dietary transitions, food insecurity, and limited nutrition programming compound this challenge. Addressing malnutrition during middle childhood and adolescence is a critical opportunity to support growth, development, and lifelong health.

This Harvard-led initiative, in partnership with the American University of Beirut (AUB) and UNICEF MENARO, aims to provide a comprehensive landscape analysis of nutrition and dietary status among children and adolescents (5–19 years) across Middle East and North Africa region. The project examines all forms of malnutrition, dietary patterns, psychosocial determinants, and policy environments. We will systematically review and analyze data, policies, programs, and psychosocial factors, synthesizing findings by country clusters aligned with UNICEF MENA Nutrition Strategic Direction and validated through engagement with stakeholders. Results will provide evidence-based recommendations to improve nutrition outcomes among vulnerable adolescents.

Responsibilities:
- Conduct systematic searches of peer-reviewed literature, grey literature, policies, and program documents, screening for eligibility and extracting relevant quantitative and qualitative data.
- Organize data into standardized frameworks and databases to support descriptive, trend, equity-focused, and gap analyses.
- Contribute to visualizations, including graphs, charts, heatmaps, and policy or stakeholder mapping.
- Support synthesis of policies, programs, school-based nutrition interventions, micronutrient programs, cross-sectoral coordination, and health economics where data permits.
- Assist with identification, categorization, and analysis of stakeholders, documenting roles, influence, and contributions to nutrition programs.

Qualifications:
Required:
- Training in Public Health, Nutrition, Epidemiology, Global Health, or related field (Advanced Master's students or doctoral students or Postdocs encouraged to apply)
- Knowledge of child and adolescent nutrition
- Excellent organizational, written, and verbal communication skills
- Ability to work independently and manage multiple tasks

Preferred:
- Familiarity with the MENA region and regional health systems
- Experience with systematic literature reviews and data extraction
- Proficiency with academic databases and search strategies
- Experience in policy analysis or health policy research
- Experience with data visualization tools (Tableau, Power BI) or statistical software (R, Stata, SPSS)
- Previous work on adolescent health or nutrition interventions in LMICs
- Experience with UNICEF frameworks or toolkits (NEAT-S, Legal Landscape Analysis Tool)

What to expect:
- Professional development in systematic evidence synthesis, policy analysis, and multi-country research
- Hourly remuneration per Harvard guidelines; Postdoc terms discussed individually
- Opportunity for co-authorship in publications and policy briefs
- Networking with Harvard, AUB, UNICEF, and regional partners
- Skill-building in UNICEF frameworks, adolescent nutrition research, and evidence-to-policy translation
- Contribution to UNICEF's strategic priorities to improve nutrition outcomes among adolescents

Start date and application:
- Expected start: by mid-January 2026
- Submit to Sachin Shinde (sshinde@hsph.harvard.edu): CV/resume, 1-page cover letter, and two professional references
- Application: Rolling basis until filled

Hourly rate: $21.00/hr