



Aida Mengistu

Sioux City, Iowa, USA

My interest in health promotion began during a class trip to a cadaver lab my senior year at Bishop Heelan Catholic High School in Sioux City, Iowa and continued at the University of Iowa where I received a BA in Health & Human Physiology, with a concentration in Health Promotion, a BS in Global Health Studies and a minor in Anthropology in 2019. My passion for global outreach stems from the years of volunteering in different sectors of community service in Iowa, Florida, Ohio, Wisconsin and South Africa.

At 18, I began to identify the disparity and structural barriers within Ethiopia that coexisted with the prosperity of my formative years in the States. As an under-represented Ethiopian-American, I strive to empower communities of their right to health and advocate for an equitable distribution of resources globally. I have traveled to Ethiopia four times, each time returning with a deeper recognition of the lifestyle and disparity in resources of the communities. At 21, I traveled to South Africa for a summer internship with the South African Red Cross Society as a Health & Care intern. I was also able to explore a personal hobby of mine – photography – as an IES Photo Correspondent. Utilizing photography to illustrate my engagement with the people, culture and traditions of South Africa allowed me to share the story and history of one of the most ethnic and culturally diverse countries in the world.

I am grateful for the opportunities I have had to meet fascinating individuals who have shared their stories, describing their passion for health equity. Through research, I have focused on global issues such as water infrastructure and alternative funding in Haiti, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in South Africa and education for young women and girls in Ethiopia. More recently, joining Bridging Domestic & Global Diversity and the Iowa N.E.W. Leadership Institute at the University of Iowa has introduced me to the role of intercultural public leadership.

As the first pilot CARTHA “Care for Community” Fellow, I will meet and engage with different organizations to identify their current efforts to address diverse health needs. Through these discussions, I will analyze for any unmet needs that can be addressed through cross-sectoral collaborative effort.

My aspiration for humanity is that individuals across the local, national and global spheres embody their roles as social change agents within their own communities, equitably provided with the essential toolkit and resources to create the change they wish to see in the world. I believe this can be achieved through cross-sectoral, global outreach and engagement to cultivate sustainable outcomes and high quality of life.