

# A **MATRIX** *Minute* with Sher Shah Amin



## About Sher Shah

Sher Shah Amin, MD, MPH, is a member of the MATRIX Prime team based at [Magee-Womens Research Institute \(MWRI\)](#) in Pittsburgh who has over 15 years of experience working in the public health arena, focusing on addressing some of the most challenging health issues facing communities in low- and middle-income countries. As an Agreement/Contract Officer Representative (AOR) for the [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) in Afghanistan, Sher Shah managed various health programs that aimed to improve the access to and quality of basic health care services for hard-to-reach populations, particularly women and children. One such program focused on improving women's access to family planning services through provision of multiple choices in contraception, including long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) methods.

### Tell us a little bit about your personal background.

I am originally from Afghanistan, where I was born, raised, and attended schools and medical college. I earned my master's degree in public health from James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University in Bangladesh. I moved to the U.S. with my wife and four kids in late 2019 and we currently live in Pittsburgh.

### What is your role within MATRIX?

As Manager of Operations, Budget and Compliance, my role is to coordinate the development and implementation of MATRIX annual workplans, performance progress reports, and the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan, and to support the grants and contracts team. I monitor the program performance indicators with MATRIX partners and support the MATRIX leadership to make sure that the implementation of program activities is properly monitored, progress is accurately reported, and challenges are being addressed in a timely manner. I also participate in quarterly review processes with activity hubs and product developers to support MATRIX leadership with regular assessment of the projects, management of challenges and effective implementation of the workplans.

### What is your favorite part about working with MATRIX?

I have worked with various health organizations in countries like Afghanistan and Bangladesh to implement public health programs focused on controlling and preventing some of the most common communicable diseases among the most vulnerable communities. Working with MATRIX has been quite a new experience for me, but with the same goal as my previous background, which is to improve the quality of life of at-risk populations by developing and advancing affordable and innovative public health interventions. It is extremely interesting for me to work with such a diverse group of partners from product developers to experts in clinical trials, socio-behavioral research, and market and business case development. It has been quite a learning opportunity as well to understand how the innovative ideas are being generated and developed to provide options for women at higher risk of HIV in the Global South. I love what we are doing every day with the support of MATRIX, and I can't wait to see that one day some of these innovative HIV prevention products are made available to end users.

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## How did you end up working with MATRIX?

When I first moved to the US in late 2019 and temporarily settled in Pittsburgh, I had originally planned on joining one of the international health organizations located in Washington DC, Virginia or Maryland. In 2020 I had gotten an offer to join the School of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, and at the time I figured that I would work with them for a little while and then move to the DC area, but I actually ended up staying with the school of medicine for almost two years. It was around that time that Sharon Hillier had reached out to me (apparently, Lisa Rossi had seen my profile on LinkedIn). She explained that MATRIX was looking for someone with experience working with USAID. I was very happy to hear this, and expressed my interest in joining MATRIX and becoming a part of this amazing team.

## As someone new to HIV prevention and to early research and development, what have you learned?

While I have previously worked in the field of HIV prevention, early research and development is still quite a new experience for me. I have learned quite a lot in this field, and I am still learning something new about it every day. It's very interesting for me to see how this research and development process goes through challenging steps to make usable, affordable and effective products available to the end users. It's not easy, and it takes quite a bit of time, patience and hard work. What's been a bigger learning opportunity for me is getting to see how that product gets developed, along with the interaction between the partners in the Global North and Global South in order to make efficient progress in the research and development process.

## What do you think you'd be doing if you hadn't gone into public health?

Working in the public health sector has been a passion of mine for many years, and I have worked with different health organizations in different countries to improve people's lives through evidence-based lifesaving public health interventions. However, if I had not fallen in love with public health, I would have been a surgeon.

## What do you like to do in your free time?

When I have the opportunity, I enjoy spending time with my kids, watching documentaries, and calling my family and friends who still live in Afghanistan.

## Do you have any heroes?

My father is my hero. He was an extremely hard-working person with firm dedication to his work as a military officer, his work in professional settings, and as a father to us. He supported me as I completed my education in a very difficult time when our country was going through a civil war.

## What might others would be surprised to know about you?

It might be hard to believe, but I was detained by the Taliban twice while I was a college student during their first time in power. Once they arrested me with a friend for playing chess publicly. We did not know it was prohibited according to their law. Second time, I was listening to music with my cousins secretly in our house, but they happened to be patrolling our street in the middle of the night. Both times, I was released by signing a bond not to commit these wrongdoings again.

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### MATRIX

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