

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white shirt and a dark jacket, is smiling. She is positioned in front of a blue banner with the World Health Organization logo and the text 'World Health Organization'. The banner also features the text 'European Region' and 'Reg'.

## Interning at WHO: Insights from Siddhant Lamichhane on AI and intern life



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In a rapidly evolving world, AI and technological advancements play a crucial role in transforming various sectors, including public health. Siddhant Lamichhane, a 22-year-old intern from Purdue University, USA, has been at the forefront of this intersection during his internship at the WHO Enabling Hub in Istanbul.

I had an opportunity to interview Siddhant on the final day of his internship, in which he shared his experiences, the innovative projects he tackled, and his thoughtful advice for those considering similar paths. Sid's perspective sheds light on the burgeoning role of AI at WHO and offers a glimpse into the future of this vital technology in the workplace.

**David Barrett (DB): Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your background?**

**Siddhant Lamichhane (SL):** My name is Siddhant Lamichhane, but everyone calls me Sid. I was born and raised in Kathmandu, Nepal, and have lived in South Korea for eight years. I'm currently studying at Purdue University, majoring in computer engineering technology and electrical engineering technology, with minors in computer network infrastructure technology and design and innovation. I just turned 22 during my internship, so a very fresh face.

**DB: How did you become involved with WHO?**

**SL:** My mother previously worked at the United Nations, which inspired me to look for similar opportunities. I found an internship at WHO that matched my interests perfectly. I had an interview, and I found out I got the internship on a Thursday. I flew out to Istanbul on Sunday to start on Monday.

**DB: Have you visited Istanbul before?**

**SL:** I am brand new to the city. I've had a great time, spending time in a new country and a new culture. Istanbul is a really fun city which I believe made the entire experience of the internship that much more enjoyable.

**DB:**  
What were your main responsibilities during the internship?



**SL:** My primary goal was to

gain work experience in the tech sector, and see how a large organization works. I worked on two AI prototype proof-of-concept applications designed as internal organizational tools. This internship gave me the chance to take what I've learned in school and really be able to apply it in this position - to sharpen my tool set, working alongside my supervisors, Mr. Nebi Bekiri and Mr. Hamza Khalil, who really helped me and provided valuable guidance and support.

**DB:** Can you explain more about the AI projects you worked on?

**SL:** The first project was a retrieval augmentation generative AI system, or RAG AI. It involved uploading documents to a cloud database and creating a search result system - think of it like a private version of ChatGPT. This helped limit hallucinations or fake information, providing accurate search results within a controlled dataset.

The second project, called the Gateway Project, involved developing a chat bot that could process natural language prompts and retrieve relevant data from the WHO Gateway API. For example, users could request unemployment rates for specific years and receive accurate, visualized data. Both projects aimed to enhance internal organizational efficiency using AI.

**DB:** I need to ask about "**hallucinations**", which for background for readers, is when the system basically makes up content. I've always wanted to ask a tech expert - does the computer know it's hallucinating?

**SL:** No, it doesn't know it's hallucinating. A machine can't manage decisions, therefore a machine can't understand if it's hallucinating or not. For it, in that moment, whatever information it's providing, is true. It is for us as users to parse it and to determine whether the information is right or wrong. That's why if you use ChatGPT, you can see at the bottom of the

prompt bar the message "ChatGPT can get answers wrong". Always double check important information!

**DB: Based on your experience, how do you see AI benefiting WHO in the future?**

**SL:** AI is advancing rapidly, just like any new technology, and the changes are happening day by day. I think it has immense potential to get things done faster. So, you know, things could work faster. Information could get collected faster. Information could be produced faster. Information could be visualized faster, which leaves more time in the day for staff to do whatever they need to do.

**DB: Based on what you know about AI now, and what you believe AI can potentially do - are the rewards of AI worth the risks?**

**SL:** AI, like any technology, has its risks and rewards. The key is using it responsibly. For instance, AI can help with data processing, fast-tracking people's work and significantly reducing the time required for certain tasks, and giving people more time for other activities. However, AI should not replace inherently human activities like decision-making or creativity like making art or writing music. Otherwise, all Jack has is all work and no play, right? So, I think properly managed, AI can be a powerful tool to assist in various functions without diminishing the value of human input.

**DB: What advice would you give to WHO staff considering bringing interns on board?**

**SL:** My advice would be to have more than one intern at a time. In the ICT unit, it is currently only me as the intern. And even though the people here are lovely and kind, they've been very warm and welcoming, it would be really nice to have other interns in the office as well. I think it would foster collaboration and provide a support system for the interns. I had a great time in my internship, thanks to the supportive staff and the guidance I received from my supervisor, Nebi. But having a group of interns would enhance the overall experience and productivity.

**DB: In various interviews I do with people, whether it is for a podcast or for a staff profile, I like to ask for books recommendations. Which book would you recommend?**

**SL:** I would recommend ["All About Love" by bell hooks](#). It's a beautifully written book that explores different aspects of love and modern society. When you spend the whole day working with machines, reading instead about love and art is a great way to think about the human condition.

**DB: As we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to add?**

**SL:** I'd just like to reiterate that WHO is a fantastic place to intern, especially the ICT unit in the European Regional hub. The experience has been enriching, and I encourage anyone considering an internship at WHO to go for it.

