

The Interactive Thematic Module, or ITM, presents a new training methodology developed by HPCR International in partnership with the Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research (HPCR) at Harvard University, and the SEA Peace Lab at Universitas Paramadina in Jakarta, Indonesia. The ITM draws on the experience of HPCR International and its partners in social networking and distance learning to provide a forum where experience is shared, dialogue is facilitated and lessons are learned.

The web-based ITM is a multi-disciplinary educational experience incorporating research, didactic and exploratory elements for professionals to acquire critical thinking skills, while refining and expanding their knowledge on tensions particular to the humanitarian and peacebuilding fields. The curriculum is organized around manifestations of these tensions, across country contexts. Participants in the ITM gain background knowledge by browsing research databases and watching multimedia expert lectures. They then critically analyze policy and operational dilemmas through video interviews with key players in the field, posting their comments and questions to a facilitated discussion forum. The ITM learning experience concludes in a dynamic, interactive collaboration among participants as part of a moderated wiki on lessons learned.

A pilot version of the ITM, to be developed over the course of 2009, will focus on the theme of youth in conflict and peacebuilding, in the contexts of Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Indonesia. The selection of these diverse locations aims to highlight prevalent dilemmas frequently associated with the role of youth, while showcasing specific regional and country experiences in confronting these challenges, and identifying lessons to be translated to new contexts.

The curriculum of the ITM will be informed by a series of researcher-practitioner workshops in early 2009, including a roundtable in partnership with Universitas Paramadina in Jakarta, Indonesia, an event at the Harvard School of Public Health, drawing on academics across the Harvard community, and web-based consultations with academics and practitioners from Sierra Leone, Indonesia and Nepal. Perspectives shared during these initial interactions will be supplemented by interviews conducted in the field.

By expanding the ability of professionals to access up-to-date, high-quality research and information, critically analyze policy dilemmas, develop new networks and interact with peers and experts, the ITM provides a dedicated and dynamic space for critical thinking about the objectives and methods of international agencies.

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