

Executive course in global health diplomacy for ASEAN countries

The Global Health Programme brings together health professionals and diplomats from all ten ASEAN countries for a course in Jakarta, Indonesia.



Between 18 and 22 October 2010, the Global Health Programme held its first executive course in global health diplomacy for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The course was organized in partnership with the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South–South Technical Cooperation (NAM CSSTC) and with support from the Indonesian government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health). The five-day course was held in Jakarta, Indonesia, and included 25 participants from all ten ASEAN countries, mostly government officials from health and foreign affairs ministries, but also representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and the media. The course was supported by a generous grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

Dr Gaudenz Silberschmidt from the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health directed the programme, which took participants through a range of case studies in health negotiations and key concepts in global health, including the increasingly important link between global health and foreign policy. Case studies included the recent Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel adopted by the World Health Assembly in May this year, as well as the Intergovernmental Working Group on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property, the Intergovernmental meeting on pandemic influenza preparedness, and the International Health Regulations. The focus then shifted to cooperation for global health at regional and national level – in particular, regional cooperation for health within ASEAN. On the last day of training, participants worked towards the development of an action plan for strengthened regional cooperation on global health issues.

Other speakers on the course included Dr Acep Somantri, Deputy Director for Economic, Socio-Cultural and Development Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia, Ms Jan Bennett, Principal Adviser, Department of Health and Ageing, Australia, Dr Niniek Naryatie,

head of the Center for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Health of Indonesia, and Dr Sunu Soemarno, Director for Socio-Cultural Affairs and International Organizations of Developing Countries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia.

Participant contributions were crucial throughout the training and were reinforced through interactive and participatory training methodologies. For many of the participants, this was the first time they were able to meet and get to know colleagues in similar positions from neighbouring countries, both in the areas of health and foreign affairs.

The course was very well received and its importance for the region acknowledged. Throughout the week, participants were invited to join several official dinners hosted by the two ministries and by the Swiss ambassador in Indonesia. The opening ceremony dinner included speeches by Dr Ratna Rosita, Secretary General for the Ministry of Health of Indonesia, and Ambassador Linggawaty Hakim, Director of NAM CSSTC. As a result of this course, there have been requests for such a course to be held annually in the region in order to develop a stronger, more comprehensive and cohesive approach to global health.

Executive courses in global health diplomacy have been pioneered by the Global Health Programme ever since it held its first course in Geneva in 2007. These courses were developed in response to the increasing interdependence between health and foreign policy issues and the need for training in this field. The courses aim to increase participants' understanding of the dynamics of global health governance and to improve their negotiation skills. New skills are needed by health and foreign affairs professionals to negotiate global regimes and international agreements and treaties, and to maintain relations with a wide range of actors.

The Global Health Programme, established at The Graduate Institute in 2008, continues to receive international recognition for its initiatives in capacity-building and research, which aim to examine the links between health, foreign policy, trade and development. Over 200 participants worldwide have been trained to date, creating an established network of alumni. Forthcoming executive courses in 2011 will be held in Geneva and China. In addition, global health diplomacy courses will soon be complemented by a series of accompanying tools including a training manual, textbook and a series of case studies.

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