

Making the world better, one implementation research at a time

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I was part of the first batch of TDR's IR postgraduate training at Universitas Gadjah Mada. This is my story three years post-TDR training, from being a monitoring and evaluation officer, to an IR consultant at WHO and UNICEF Philippines, and now as a Technical Officer in the WHO Regional Office for Europe where I am using my training in IR to strengthen national health research systems and support knowledge management in COVID19-response.

I vividly remember the day I received an email for a call for applications from a WHO-TDR on postgraduate training in IR. Back then I was training as a psychologist, but having been recently involved in public health research, I was yearning to understand more about public health. As an analytical person, I got enticed by IR principles, so I applied. Fast forward to 8 September 2015 I was notified that I will be starting my course 3 months later in Yogyakarta.

My MPH thesis on an IR to investigate the feasibility of integrated TB and HIV testing at primary health care centers (PHCs) in the Philippines supported a policy by our Department of Health (DOH) which allowed primary healthcare staff to provide HIV services in remote municipalities

I did not wait too long to find a job post-graduation from MPH; I was recruited by Save the Children as a monitoring and evaluation officer to support a formative research to design interventions promoting disaster resilience among Filipino urban poor. I was also recruited by UNICEF to support implementation of community interventions against online child sexual exploitation and abuse in urban poor areas in Manila.

In mid-2018 I became a consultant of WHO Philippines' HIV and Hepatitis unit where I worked with grassroots organizations in using IR to assess the feasibility of piloting HIV self-testing in the Philippines. Afterwards, I transferred to the mental health and substance unit where I worked with the DOH in doing IR workshops to optimize the implementation of voluntary outpatient clinics for Filipinos who use drugs.

The IR training from TDR gave me an advantage in applying for international staff positions within WHO. On 6 February 2019, I received a message confirming my appointment as a Technical Officer in WHO Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen where I'll be working on national health research systems strengthening. Eleven months later, I am now part of the Secretariat of the European Health Research Network, and the Health Evidence Network where I am using my IR training to support countries in the European Region to strengthen mechanisms within health systems that catalyze evidence-informed health policymaking. Recently, I have also been repurposed to support knowledge management of the COVID19-response.

This contest reminded me of how I have come a meaningful way in my career which would not have been possible without TDR. It is a privilege for me to now work for WHO, which I consider as my service in return for TDR's support.