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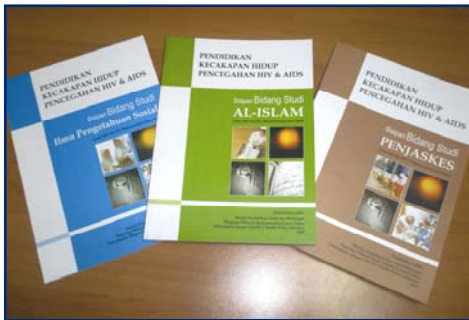
**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Indonesia's Islamic Schools Adopt HIV Curricula

Reaching young people through religious schools in East Java will help prevent HIV and reduce stigma.



HIV curricula designed for Islamic middle schools in East Java Province, Indonesia.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HPI/INDONESIA

By the end of November 2009, 258 Islamic middle schools integrated HIV curricula into three subjects.

USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1
<http://www.healthpolicyinitiative.com>

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This 2009–10 school year, students attending Islamic middle schools in East Java Province are learning about HIV prevention and stigma reduction. By the end of November 2009, about 260 Islamic middle schools had integrated HIV curricula into three Grade 7 subjects: physical education, social studies, and Al-Islam. To support this effort, more than 750 teachers received training to use the curricula.

Design and adoption of such curricula as well as trainings in their use are the result of more than two years of technical assistance and advocacy by the USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1, which is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Since 2007, the Health Policy Initiative has partnered with two prominent Islamic organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. In the high-HIV prevalence province of East Java, the project strengthened the HIV advocacy capacity of a team of Islamic leaders, worked with them to sensitize religious leaders and communities, and assisted these organizations to integrate HIV into their programs.

The East Java action plans emphasize reaching young people with accurate HIV information. In Indonesia, HIV is perceived as more of a moral and social issue than a medical one, leading to stigmatization of people living with HIV and other most at-risk populations. Integrating HIV awareness and prevention strategies into Islamic schools will help reduce the spread of HIV and pave the way for a sensitive, progressive discussion of HIV issues at the community level.

In late 2008, the Health Policy Initiative collaborated with teachers, health professionals, and experts on Islamic teachings to design HIV curricula for Islamic community- and religious-based schools associated with Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. To date, 258 Muhammadiyah middle schools have adopted the curricula. A draft HIV curriculum is being finalized with Nahdlatul Ulama and is expected to be taught in 535 high schools in East Java next year.

Islamic leaders in East Java have committed to conducting *jihad* (faith-based struggle) against the virus itself rather than those affected by HIV. This commitment goes beyond simply speaking out against HIV and stigma. By incorporating HIV curricula into Islamic schools, religious leaders have taken active steps to educate young people about HIV prevention and encourage compassion toward those living with HIV, which will have a long-term impact on community attitudes and behaviors.