

September 2024 | Version 2

# Training on Religions and Development Research Course

**Module 3:**  
Practical Application

**Session 1:**  
Planning research I



Joint Learning Initiative  
on Faith & Local Communities

# Homework (pre-session)

Students must think of a topic they would like to research in their communities. If they have more than one idea, they can bring up to three ideas to class. For each idea, they should write down answers to the following questions. This could be in the form of sentences or bullet points.

- What is the topic that I would like to research?
- Why is it important for this topic to be researched?
- Have others researched this topic before? What would I do differently to them? What contribution would my research make? Am I the right person to conduct this research?
- What forms of data collection and analysis could I use for this research?
- How should research ethics be considered during this research?

# Introduction and Recap

(10–30 minutes)

It is good practice to start this session with some time (depending on your available time, this could be as little as 10 minutes or as long as 30 minutes) to recap with the students and introduce them to module 3.

**Recap:** The instructor could ask them what we have covered in class so far, what they have learned, what they have enjoyed, and what they found useful for their work. You could either do this in a big group discussion or pair students and have them discuss this with a partner.

**Introduction to Module 3:** Following this, the instructor introduces students to Module 3, explaining that Module 1 provided an overview of key topics in religions and development research, module 2 introduced them to research methods, and Module 3 now allows them to try out some of these skills. The instructor explains to students that they will be able to complete small research projects, with an emphasis on small. There is no need to be overly ambitious. Even just doing two or three interviews and analysing them is excellent. It is better to conduct a small project but complete it than to be very ambitious and then not able to see the work through to completion.

# Discussion or Research Ideas

(1–2.5 hours)

**Discussion of research ideas (estimated time: 30 min–1 hour):** Following this introduction, students should be given some time to discuss their research ideas. It is recommended to do that in small groups of 3–5 students so that students have a relatively safe space to share their ideas and don't have to sit through every single person in the room presenting their ideas. Students should be encouraged to give each other feedback and help their classmates think their ideas through. Instructors can walk through the classroom, listen to different groups' discussions, and offer input when required.

**Visualisation of research ideas (estimated time: 15–30 min):** In addition to small group discussions, it is recommended that students write down their research ideas on Manila paper/poster. This can be done in creative ways (e.g., using drawings) or more conventional points (e.g., bullet points/lists/tables).

**Gallery walk and group feedback (estimated time: 30 minutes–1 hour):** Once everyone has completed the posters with their research ideas, these can be displayed in the classroom, and students can take some time to take in everyone's work. This can then be followed by a group discussion and time for feedback. Instructors should use this time to pick up on anything they may have noticed during the session so far. Are there any parts of the research design that several students struggle with? Can other students offer advice? If not, instructors can offer their thoughts at this point and refer students to the readings. At the end of the session, all students must have a better idea of what they would like to work on for their research. Specifically, instructors should keep on reminding students to keep their research projects manageable and ask themselves if they have the resources to conduct it. It is also important to help students narrow down their questions. From experience, students tend to have big ideas that often tend to be vague initially—asking students what exactly they want to do, why, and why this and not something else, can be very helpful in this context.

