

Fit for School Programme

Improving health for better education and child development

The challenge

Students suffering from diseases are more frequently absent from school, sleep less, and show an overall lower learning outcome compared than their healthy peers. In Lao PDR, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines, diseases related to lack of hygiene, such as diarrhea, intestinal worms, respiratory infections and dental caries, are still the leading causes of illness and death among children. Neglected water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in school further exacerbate these highly preventable diseases.

Our approach

Promoting healthy habits in conducive learning environments allows children to make the most of their education through better health. This is also reflected in the SDG 4 on Quality Education, which, under 4.a.1, includes an indicator on schools with access to basic drinking water; usable single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and basic handwashing facilities with available water and soap. Children benefit from improved water, sanitation and hygiene in schools regardless of their background, so existing disadvantages and inequalities are reduced and all have better chances to live a healthy and productive life.

The Fit for School Approach strengthens school-based management to support the implementation of water, sanitation and hygiene programmes, including daily handwashing and toothbrushing and regular deworming, to address high-impact diseases. Combined with improved access to clean water, washing facilities and appropriate sanitation, key determinants of health are addressed in a single intervention package.

The GIZ Fit for School Programme

On behalf of BMZ, GIZ has fostered the Fit for School Approach in the Philippines since 2008 by supporting the Department of Education to implement the Essential Health Care Programme (EHCP), which delivers these interventions to public elementary schools.

Due to the high demand from other Southeast Asian governments, GIZ was commissioned by BMZ to implement the Regional Fit for School Programme. The Programme was launched in 2011 in partnership with the Southeast Asian Ministries of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and its Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH). The Programme supported the adaptation of the Fit for School Approach to three new countries - - Cambodia, Lao PDR and Indonesia - - through the development of replicable implementation models and guidelines. As the models have been integrated into Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programmes in Schools, GIZ now supports government-led scale-up in the respective partner countries.

Project name	Regional Fit for School Programme
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Southeast Asia (Philippines, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Cambodia)
Lead executing agencies	Regional Partner: SEAMEO Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Cambodia West Java Provincial Education Office, Indonesia Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR Department of Education, Philippines
Duration	Regional Programme: December 2011 - November 2018

Results

From its beginnings as a GIZ-supported pilot programme in one Philippine province, the EHCP became the cornerstone of the Department of Education's WASH in Schools (WinS) Programme, which is now a national flagship program. Confident with their own experience in implementation, government partners in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Indonesia have since led the scale-up to more schools and localities, benefitting between 90,000 and 200,000 children per country.



L-R: Group handwashing activity in Lao PDR; School deworming activity in West Java, Indonesia; Group toothbrushing activity in Cambodia

A longitudinal health outcome study measured the impact of the interventions in the Philippines and has shown positive health effects in terms of weight increase, reduction of absenteeism, improvement of oral health and reduction of worm infections.

A similar study conducted in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Indonesia revealed better access to WASH facilities, and improved practice of handwashing with soap, among students in intervention schools. Furthermore, the Programme strengthened the implementation of existing national deworming programs. Daily toothbrushing practices led to 17 to 37 percent less tooth decay among students in implementing schools, depending on the country.

Success factors

Simple, sustainable, scalable, and system-focused

The Fit for School Approach is based on four core principles: simplicity, sustainability, scalability and system focus. A WASH in Schools programme and its interventions must be based on the best possible evidence and should be cost-effective and simplified to facilitate implementation in the school context with little extra effort. To ensure sustainability, long-term allocation of government human and financial resources is crucial. Close partnership with the parents and the local community is imperative in maximizing ownership, transparency and accountability.

Capitalizing on existing systems and resources is an essential strategy for scalability and sustainability. The approach works through the education sector, especially at the subnational level, to promote sustainable programme management and implementation within the local structures. Additional payments and monetary incentives are not part of the approach since they often lead to a collapse of activities as soon as the external funding ends.

School-based management

Recognizing the importance of School-based Management, the Fit for School Approach strengthens the capacity of the education sector to implement and monitor WinS and open the doors of schools for close collaboration with parents and the larger school

community. Every member of the community can contribute in various important ways to make the programme successful, including the construction of washing facilities, participation in monitoring, cleaning, repair, and maintenance. In this way, even schools with very limited resources can start to improve the school environment step-by-step and implement simple but effective WinS interventions.



Success story

The Ministry of Education and Sports in Lao PDR has scaled up Fit for School from 22 model schools to over 1,100 schools in the span of five years.

Ms. Sengdeuane Boudsadee, a parent from Dongsavad School, says, "I am very proud to be part of the program. This program helps children practice daily hygiene activities. My child is cleaner now and he also encourages his siblings to carry out hygiene activities at home. We support the school with materials and labor for the construction of the washing facility. I like to support the school since what they are doing is for our children, and I see that many things are improving in our school and I would like to contribute to these improvements."

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