

Fit for School Programme

Improving health for better education and child development

The challenge

Schools are key public institutions where students, staff and community members come together, interact closely and share common spaces. Thus, the risk of transmitting infectious diseases in school settings is high. Schools are also the institutions where lifelong hygiene behaviors are acquired and serve as models for parents and communities. Therefore, routine hygiene measures serve two purposes: as school-based activities to improve personal hygiene of children, particularly washing hands with water and soap and toothbrushing, and emphasizing the importance of better environmental hygiene through proper cleaning. Establishing this culture of cleanliness and hygiene in schools is at the core of the program so that schools serve with purpose as safe public institutions and to prevent and control the risk of infection within the community.

Our approach

The Fit for School Approach strengthens school-based management to support the implementation of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs, including daily handwashing and tooth-brushing, regular deworming, waste management and regular cleaning 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.

Promoting healthy habits in conducive learning environments allows children to make the most of their education through better health and wellbeing. This is also reflected in the SDG 4 on Quality Education under target 4.a.1, requiring access to basic drinking water, usable single-sex basic sanitation facilities, and basic handwashing facilities with available water and soap in schools.

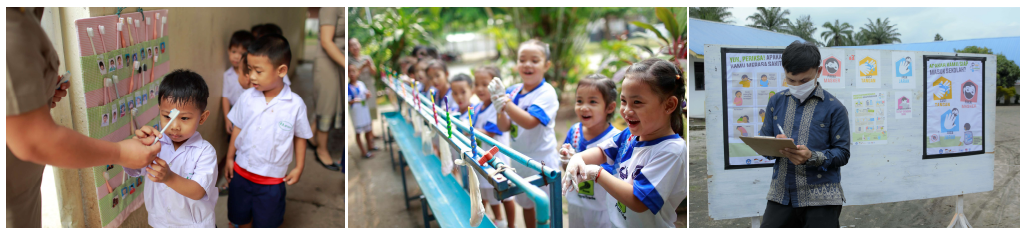
The GIZ Fit for School Programme

On behalf of German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and in partnership with the Southeast Asian Ministries of Education Organization and its Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH), the program supports Ministries of Education in the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia and Lao PDR to rollout policies, implementing guidelines, and monitoring systems for WASH in Schools.

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	SEAMEO (Southeast-Asian Ministers of Education Organization)/ SEAMEO INNOTECH
Implementing Partners	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Cambodia Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology and SEAMEO RECFON, Indonesia Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR Department of Education, Philippines
Duration	Regional programme : December 2011 – December 2022

Fit for School cooperates closely with UNICEF through the joint publication of the “Three Star Approach for WASH in Schools” and the joint co-hosting of the annual WASH in Schools International Learning Exchanges since 2012.

Fit for School further collaborates with Unilever, focusing on scaling up clean and usable toilets in public schools. With support from the Hygiene and Behavior Change Coalition (HBCC) of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office and Unilever, the collaboration was extended to integrate pandemic preparedness and response measures in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Cambodia.



L-R: Learners line up for toothbrushing group activity in Cambodia; Handwashing group activity in Lao PDR; Checklists monitoring in Indonesia

Results

Transparency and accountability to WASH standards and reaching its benchmarks are driving forces in the education sector to engage school heads and education officials and trigger action at all levels and at nationwide scale. This institutional behavior change has improved the learning environment of children. In the 4 partner countries, approximately 7.5 million learners are attending schools with improved WASH conditions for safe drinking water, usable sanitation facilities, and handwashing by reaching the WinS minimum standards (as of December 2021).

Between 2019 and 2021, the proportion of schools with access to basic WASH services have improved significantly in the four partner countries. Support to the monitoring and attainment SDG indicators as integrated into national WinS standards helped to keep partner countries on track to achieve universal coverage of basic drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene services in schools by 2030.

Percentage of schools with access to basic WASH services in the 4 regional partner countries, 2019 - 2021

Country	% of schools that reached the Basic Service Level for WASH					
	Water		Sanitation		Hygiene	
	2019	2021	2019	2021	2019	2021
Cambodia	73%	76%	32%	32%	48%	68%
Philippines	47%	45%	39%	74%	54%	61%
Indonesia	73%	73%	40%	47%	59%	66%
Lao PDR	no data	56%	16%	32%	35%	35%

Data source: UNICEF & WHO (2020, 2022) Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools Reports

A longitudinal health outcome study measured the impact of the interventions in the partner countries, revealing better access to WASH facilities, and improved practice of handwashing with soap. 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. The interventions also showed positive health effects in terms of weight increase and reduction of absenteeism.

Success factors

The Fit for School Approach is based on four core principles: simplicity, sustainability, scalability and system focus. A WinS program 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 to promote sustainable programme management and implementation within local structures.

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 closer collaboration with parents and the larger school community. In this way, even schools with very limited resources can start to improve the school environment step-by-step by implementing simple but effective WASH interventions.

Facing Adversity

The COVID-19 pandemic brought to fore the importance of health and hygiene protocols in continuing school operations in all the partner countries of the regional program. During this period, the Fit for School was able to mobilize and implement Study and Expert Funds (SEF) for "Strengthening International Cooperation for WASH in Schools against COVID-19", wherein the secretariat and knowledge sharing functions of the Global WinS Network was strengthened to promote global learning and the faster and wider dissemination of global guidance and best practices particularly among Ministries of Education. SEF funds for "Group handwashing facilities for schools in the partner countries of the Fit for School Regional Program" provided 2,495 schools with 4,909 handwashing facilities to help with the increased hand hygiene requirements during the pandemic. In 2022, the program will further be implementing BMZ support to national COVID vaccination campaigns through social media and youth mobilization.

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