

Report of the 2nd Training Course on School Health and Nutrition Programmes in Asia

National University of Laos, 12-20 February 2013,
Vientiane, Lao PDR



Jointly hosted by the Lao PDR Ministries of Education & Health.

Coordinated by Mahidol University, Thailand, the Japan Consortium for Global School Health Research, Japan and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD), Imperial College London, United Kingdom.

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Introduction

The 2nd Annual Training Course on School Health & Nutrition Programmes in Asia was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, from the 12th – 20th of February 2013. The course was jointly hosted by the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and coordinated by Mahidol University, Thailand, the Japan Consortium for Global School Health Research, Japan, and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD), Imperial College London, United Kingdom.

This course brought together regional representatives from Ministries of Education and Health, the United Nations agencies, bilaterals and regional non-governmental organisations to promote the sharing of good practice, knowledge and experiences in school health and nutrition (SHN) both between countries and across sectors.

This report summarises the knowledge shared and activities undertaken by the forty delegates that participated in the 2013 course from eleven Asian countries: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Course facilitators with recognised expertise in SHN assisted participants to draft country-specific action plans and stimulate lively debates and discussions on current and innovative issues in the field.

The course placed a strong emphasis on building country capacity and strengthening regional partnering initiatives which seek to harmonise SHN activities, thereby contributing to the achievement of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

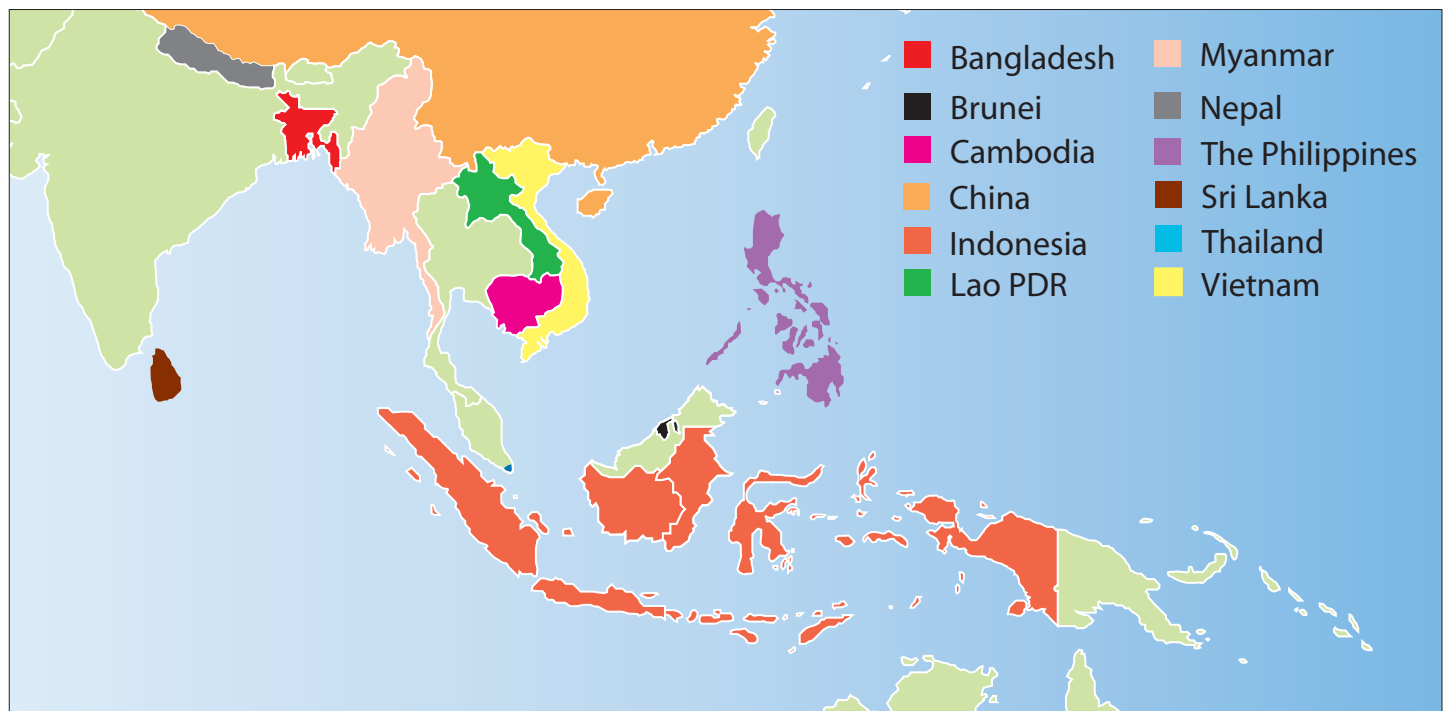


Figure 1: Countries in attendance at the 2013 Training Course on School Health & Nutrition.

Delegates from a wide variety of sectors participated in the training course including Ministries of Education & Health, academia, the United Nations agencies and bilaterals as well as non-governmental organisations. One of the main objectives of the course is to develop

partnerships in the region's SHN community and this is demonstrated by the fact that 35% of the course participants were Ministry of Education staff while 15% were Ministry of Health staff, traditionally the two ministries that host SHN departments.

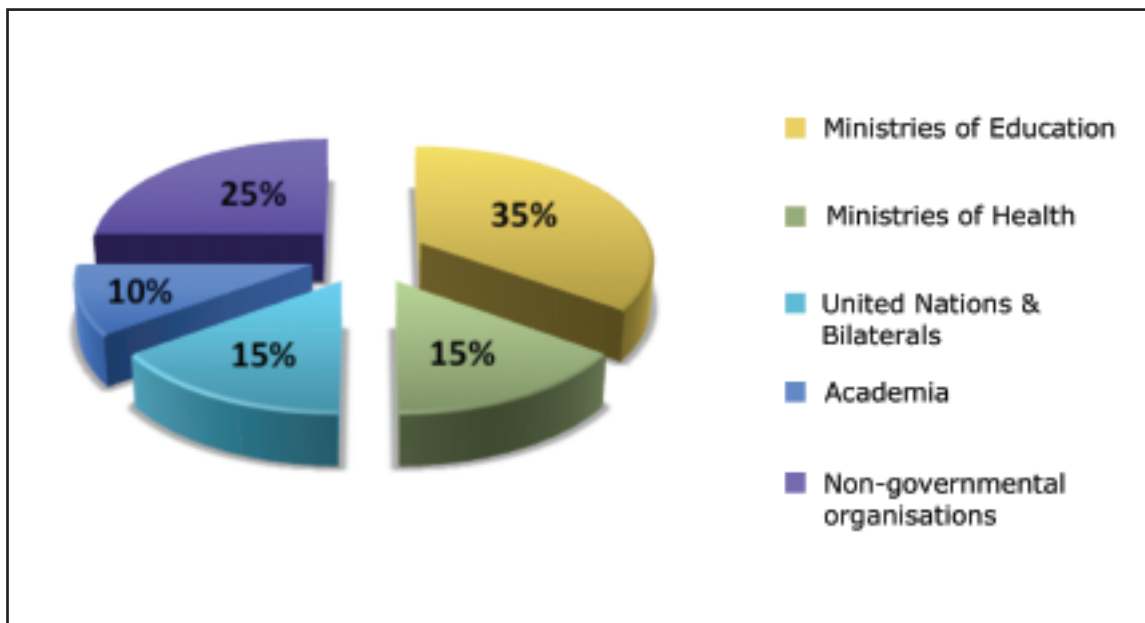


Figure 2: *Distribution of participants by sector.*

Course Rationale & History

In the past decade, rapid progress has been made across Asia in putting in place policies, strategies and activities to support the implementation of School Health and Nutrition programmes in primary and secondary education. There is considerable diversity in approach reflecting different policy priorities, social contexts, programme structures and level of resources in the region. Although context specific planning is necessary, commonalities among countries' SHN programmes exist, lending themselves to experience sharing on a multi-sectoral and diverse regional course such as this. Regional experiences and lessons learnt have been instrumental in refining SHN programming globally, especially with regard to sustainable programme planning.

However, new challenges such as child obesity arise and renewed efforts are required to scale up interventions to ensure that all those in school are able to benefit from them and that out-of-school children are not left behind. Targeted capacity building initiatives and practical support for those in the frontline of delivery of SHN programmes is a critical, although sometimes overlooked, method to achieve better education through better health. Even when governments and other agencies are convinced by the evidence-base for health-based programming in schools, they often do not have the human resources and the training materials needed to move forward with policies and programmes. Where expertise does exist, staff turnover amongst educationalists and public health professionals can be high and those with competence are often quickly moved to more prominent posts. There is therefore,

an urgent need to increase the number and quality of trained staff who can run the programmes that children need. Scaling up SHN activities requires sufficient human resources which in turn increases demand for capacity building programmes.

In response to these identified needs in Asia, this regional training course was proposed to build upon current activities and create a strong network of SHN professionals in the region. The combination of the parasite control expertise of the Asian Centre of International Parasite Control (ACIPAC) at Mahidol University's Faculty of Tropical Medicine, the research and policy analysis experience of the Japan Consortium for Global School Health Research (JC-GSHR) and the operational experience in school health and nutrition of the Partnership for Child Development (PCD) can provide a strong platform for this new activity. Following a consultation process with both governmental and non-governmental actors in 2011, the first Asian School Health and Nutrition Training Course was held in February 2012. The first course welcomed forty-two school health and nutrition staff from ten Asian countries who discussed the key topic of school feeding programme design.

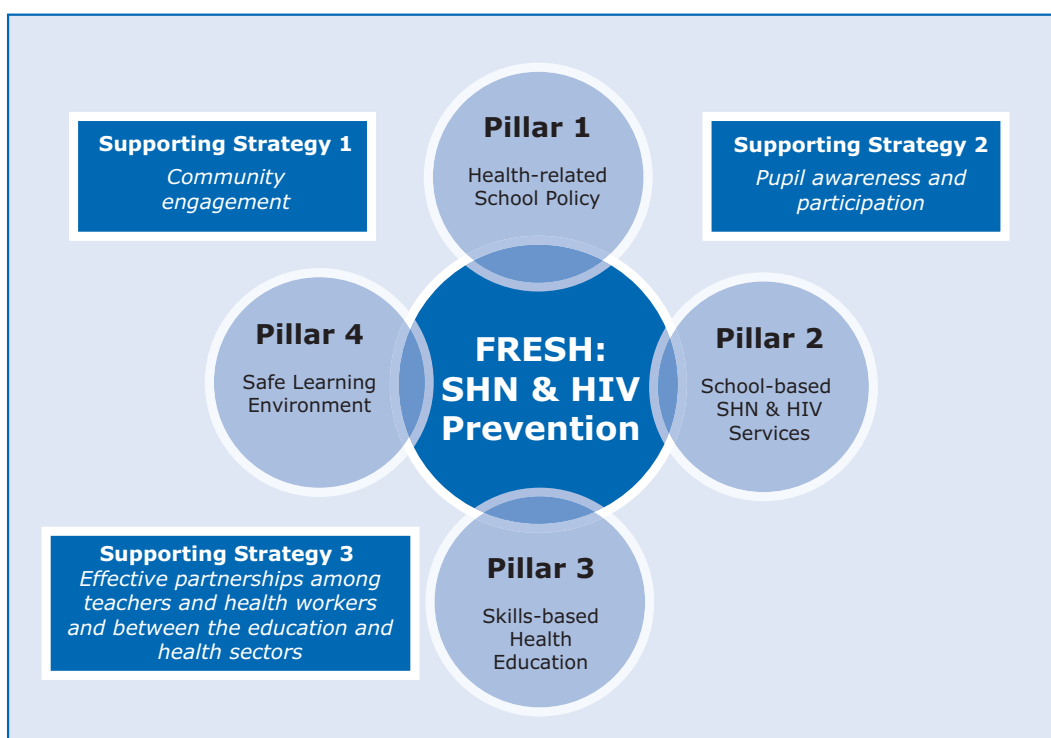


Figure 3: The four pillars of the Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH) Framework and its complementary supporting strategies.

The participants of the 2012 course unanimously decided that the key topic for the next regional training event should be parasite control. Many approaches to SHN programming in Asian countries already use the Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH) Framework developed by the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank and it was decided that this would be used to guide the course agenda (see Figure 3 above).

As shown in Figure 3 above, the four pillars of the Framework are:

- i) *Policy development*
- ii) *Skills-based health education,*
- iii) *School-based SHN services, and*
- iv) *Safe school environment*

There are also three supporting strategies:

1. *Community participation*
2. *Pupil participation*
3. *Partnerships between sectors*

It was planned that this training course would deliver a programmatic dimension to these strategies as well as featuring new and regionally appropriate topics. The Partnership for Child Development also works with ACIPAC's sister organisations in Africa, the West Africa Centre of International Parasite Control (WACIPAC) and the Eastern & Southern Africa Centre of International Parasite Control (ESACIPAC) to produce an annual FRESH-based training course and these experiences were used to develop the course structure along with the local expertise of Mahidol University and the research knowledge of the JC-GSHR.

Course Structure & Objectives

The key objectives for the training course were as follows:

1. Strengthen global, regional, national and local **partnerships** in the SHN community.
2. Provide **evidence-based teaching** that will improve SHN knowledge in the Asia region.
3. Strengthen **capacity**, at the national and regional level, of both health and education sectors to support all SHN components, specifically parasite control, the course's key topic.

The course was delivered over eight days and time was shared between lectures, workshops and field visits at the National University of Laos in Vientiane. The course covered a variety of topics within the area of school health and nutrition, notably: parasite control (the key course topic), SHN policy implementation, innovating in school health, inclusive education and workshops to produce individual SHN action plans for each country.

The course was structured to be as participatory as possible and included plenty of time for participants to discuss and develop country-specific SHN action plans, both in their national teams and in mixed-country working groups.

Meeting the Course Objectives

In order to meet the course objectives of building partnerships, improving regional capacity and providing evidence-based tuition in SHN the following activities were undertaken:

Objective 1. Strengthen global, regional, national and local partnerships in the SHN community

A number of activities were undertaken during the course that strengthened partnerships in the regions SHN community, these included information sharing sessions at the start of the course to introduce their country programmes and a 'marketplace' networking evening where participants could discuss their country SHN programmes and best practices and share key

materials in an informal setting. Partnerships are a crucial part of successful SHN programmes and this year saw the introduction of a dedicated partnership working session where participants developed skills in negotiation, communication and coordination through a series of interactive exercises.

Objective 2. Provide evidence-based teaching that will improve SHN knowledge in the Asia region.

A variety of lectures from world class facilitators were offered throughout the course covering all aspects of School Health & Nutrition. Field visits to schools and teacher training centres, both inside and outside Vientiane also offered the participants the opportunity to see SHN programmes in action. (See page 7).



Dr. Jitra Waikagul, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University lectures on Thailand's school health programmes.

Field Visits: Urban and Rural Vientiane

The course participants visited two primary schools in rural Vientiane Province, a primary school in urban Vientiane City and a regional teacher training college.

The visit, conducted over a day and half, took in tours at schools from teachers, staff and pupils and listened to presentations on their school health initiatives. The course participants also visited a teacher training college where they learnt about the preparation that trainee teachers get to teach health promotion and conduct health checks.

Participants had the opportunity to talk to teachers and students and learned more about their attitudes and understanding concerning the different health and nutritional conditions. The field visit highlighted the very active and inspiring role of students in these successful schools and participation in both school feeding and education programmes on malaria and sanitation were high.

Participants had the opportunity to speak to teachers, pupils and local education authority staff and learned about their attitudes and activities concerning health and nutrition activities. The field visits particularly highlighted exceptional programme practices including child-to-child learning, health promotion, water and sanitation and teacher training practices.

The children and teachers of *Sokpaluang School* in Vientiane City showcased water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH) activities and facilities. The school is one of the pioneers of the *Fit for School* initiative in Laos and has installed a communal hand and



Communal hand washing basin, Sokpaluang School, Vientiane.

tooth-washing basin that whole classes can use at once. The system is very water efficient as it only releases a thin stream of water for each child which is controlled by the teacher.

At *Nongnak School* in Vientiane Province the course participants observed a child-to-child based lesson. Final year primary school students worked with children from the first two years of school to develop posters on health education messages such as hand-washing, deworming and malaria precautions. The participants heard from the teaching staff how this method of tuition has been developed at the school over the past few years.

At *Phonehong School* in Vientiane Province the focus was on health screening and health promoting activities at the school. The course participants observed an interactive health education lesson for grade 3 children that covered hand and tooth hygiene; teachers also conducted the weekly tooth and fingernail check during the visit.

The final field activity was a visit to the *Bankoun Teacher Training Centre*, a regional teacher training college on the outskirts of Vientiane. The college trains around 300 teachers each year and all teachers take a compulsory life skills module which covers sexual and reproductive health (SRH), sanitation and hygiene and nutrition. The course participants engaged with the college staff and trainee teachers and discussed the strategies used to ensure that new teachers were aware of key child health issues and able to present them effectively and interactively in the classroom.



Final year primary school students working with first and second year children on health and education message posters, Nongnak School, Vientiane.

Objective 3. Strengthen capacity, at the national and regional level, of both health and education sectors to support all SHN components, specifically parasite control

Translating policy and strategy documents into pragmatic programmatic terms is pivotal to the success of any school health programme. By the end of the course the country teams had developed draft action plans for their country programmes that they could take back to their organisations to further elaborate and finalise with their teams and in-country partners.

Capacity to develop SHN components was developed through:

- Sharing cutting edge evidence and technical information
- Providing tools to aid in evaluation and development of programmes
- Exchange of information in workshop/breakout sessions
- One-to-one time with expert trainers
- The course agenda also included a series of field visit providing the participants an opportunity to explore the reality of programme implementation on the ground

Participants received an array of different resources that could assist advocacy, ranging from briefing sheets and learned documents to films. An electronic library in the form of an online database of course materials was made available to the participants.



Course Highlights

Sustainability of SHN: Human Resources and Partnership

Talks on sustainable human resource development and the role of strong SHN policy implementation in building strong and sustainable SHN programme were provided by Dr Jun Kobayashi of Nagasaki University and Dr Sachi Tomokawa of Shinshu University, Japan. Through a series of interactive workshops, participants were asked to carry out situation analysis about human resource training and integration between SHN activities and health education in school. The field visit to the Bankoun Teacher Training Centre, a regional teacher training college, offered insight to Lao PDR's approach to human resource training.

The importance of partnership working across sectors and regions was emphasised by Ms Brie McMahon, Senior Partnerships Manager of the PCD. The talk explored the important role of strong partnerships in designing and delivering effective SHN programmes. Group competitions, role plays and lectures were used to train participants on how to network and form meaningful partnerships and effect change and tackle complex challenges through collaboration.



Course participants during the partnerships session.

Supporting Strategies in SHN

The course hosted a selection of sessions which showcased evidence-based strategies and best practices in the development of effective school health programming including school feeding and WASH.

The course participants had an opportunity to learn about Lao PDR's school feeding programme from Ms Yangxia Lee, Director of Inclusive Education Center, Ministry of Education, Lao PDR. The session presented insights into how Lao PDR's experience of launching the National School Meals Programme in 2012. This report included the success of the school lunch programme, made available to 227 public primary schools. School

visits in Vientiane province exhibited evident gains in knowledge acquisition, infrastructure development including greatly improved WASH facilities, demonstrable behaviour change and good hygiene practices amongst the school pupils and the teaching community.

Following the Lao PDR's school food and nutrition programme, the evidence supporting the cost-effectiveness of school feeding programmes was given by Mr Iain Gardiner, Senior Programme Manager of PCD. The advantages of linking small scale farmers with school feeding programmes via Home Grown School Feeding Programmes (HGSF) were highlighted in this session.

Key Topic: Parasite Control

The key topics of the course focused on Parasite Control (deworming). Prof. Sir Roy Anderson, Director of the London Centre for NTD Research and Ms Jane Lillywhite, the managing director of PCD opened this session, providing an overview of parasite control within the global health agenda and insight into the global SHN situation. The presentation highlighted the current situation of global parasite infection and emphasised the need of a comprehensive approach, where well-designed researches and parasite control strategies integrate to tackle these challenges in schools.

During the course of the week, the participants received further tuition from Dr Irene Ayi of WACIPAC, University of Ghana and Prof. Sir Roy Anderson. These lectures covered the links between parasite infection and malnutrition, the role of parasite control in improving health of school children and expanded programmes for parasite control. In addition, participants shared best practices, knowledge and experiences in SHN.

An introduction to the FRESH Framework and group discussion session was presented by Mr Cai Health, Programme Manager, PCD. The participants were tasked to discuss about key school-based services and health education programming for successful parasite control in relation to the four FRESH pillars.

The country teams then consolidated this work into an action plan highlighting key short- and medium-term goals for their country programmes, specifically focusing on WASH, deworming and school feeding.



Prof. Sir Roy Anderson presenting on parasite control.



Country teams working on action plans.

Reviewing the Course & Next Steps

The course evaluation used a practical methodology to gather direct information about satisfaction with the course content, organization and the development of the course in the future. Immediate feedback was gathered from all 40 participants on the final day of the course.

The course organisers were keen to evaluate how future courses could be better tailored to improve the experience of the participant; the evaluation also asked what the key topics should be for the next regional training event.

A key recommendation was that more development partners from the region such as UNESCO, UNICEF and WFP as well as other regional institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and academic groups should take part in the training to improve the impact outcomes of the country-based action plan development sessions. This feedback will be taken on board by the course organisers and integrated into the planning process for the next training course.



Participants and facilitators on the final day of the course.

Further Information

For further information or to download the training course material,
please refer to the website:

www.schoolsandhealth.org

Or alternatively contact:

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