



FIT FOR SCHOOL

Essential Health Care Package for Filipino Children

> Report

Governors' Meeting: Advocacy Forum on Intersectoral Approaches to Improve the Health of Filipino Children

in partnership with

Fit for School
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Governors' Meeting: Advocacy Forum on Intersectoral Approaches to Improve the Health of Filipino Children

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An advocacy meeting under the patronage of the League of Provinces has convened 13 of the governors of the 16 "Fourmula one" provinces of the Philippines and 35 high level officials of the DOH, DepEd, WHO and experts from College of Public Health, University of the Philippines to discuss the alarmingly poor health status of nations' children. The meeting was supported by InWent, Capacity building Germany and German Technical Corporation (GTZ), Dr. Susan Mabunga from the UPCPH acted as facilitator of the event.



Dr. Susan Mabunga of the UP Manila College of Public Health facilitating the activity.



The Governors of the F1 provinces discussing the benefits of the project.

Dr. Belizario, Deputy Director of National Institute of Health, presented that majority of children are suffering from intestinal worms and dental caries. These diseases affecting the children are not life-

threatening but they are neglected and have huge impact on their physical and mental development and on their school attendance, quality of life and ability to resist other serious and potentially life threatening diseases. Worm infections cause anemia, reduced physical growth, delayed motor activity and poor mental development; malnourished children become even more malnourished. Children who suffer from toothache cannot eat, sleep or concentrate at school and their growth and development is affected.

The experts and politicians discussed issues around the implementation of an "Essential Health Care Package for Filipino Children" which is ready available at a cost of ~ 25 PhP per child per year. The project is a straight forward, practical effort to substantially improve the health of Filipino children by involving different sectors and using the schools and day care centers as venues to reach all children with simple, evidence-based and low-cost health care measures. Exposure to school based daily hand-washing, fluoride tooth brushing and twice-a-year deworming will familiarize children with healthy habits and is expected have as well an impact on awareness concerning water and sanitation issues in the communities and hygiene practices in family-life.

Prof. Wim van Palenstein, representative of the WHO Collaboration Center in the Netherlands confirmed the accordance of the EHCP with recent WHO policies and highlighted its importance for the Asian region. He stated the project as the appropriate response to WHO's call for action, asking Governments to implement effective strategies in order to reduce the huge burden of neglected childhood diseases like intestinal parasites and toothdecay.

Dr. Navarrez, Ass. Director of DepEd's Health and Nutrition Center highlighted DepEd's strategy on moving towards the MDGs and emphasized the need

for collaboration with other agencies due to lack of financial resources to implement health programs on a wider scale. The Basic Education Reform Agenda (BESRA) with school based management and School improvement Plan (SIP) paves the way for close collaboration between the school and the LGUs.

Undersecretary of Health, Dr. Mario Villaverde supported the strategy of implementing Health Programs in the schools and confirmed that the implementation of the EHCP should be included in the Annual Operation Plans (AOPs) of the provinces and encouraged the DepEd to coordinate with the F1 teams.

Dr. Israel Pargas, representing PhilHealth gave an overview about the benefit package of the Social Health Insurance Corporation and explained that the corporation is currently carrying out a review process concerning the benefit package.

The latter part of the advocacy meeting showcased the existing implementation of the EHCP in the province of Misamis Oriental, Northern Mindanao, where DepEd under the strong leadership of Schools Division Superintendent Dr. Sinforosa Guiñares has implemented handwashing and fluoride toothbrushing as daily activity in all 360 public Elementary schools in the entire province covering about 110 000 children. The resources for the implementation were allocated by the provincial government of Misamis Oriental, spearheaded by Governor Oca Moreno. A video featuring the actual steps of the implementation of the program gave the audience an inside view. Dr. Guiñares and Gov. Oca Moreno expressed their satisfaction with the successful implementation, the programs high appreciation by the children and parents alike.



Gov. Ben P. Evardone along with other F1 governors signing the pledge of commitment



Stakeholders from DepEd, DOH and other participating foreign agencies.

Skeptical teachers get more convinced with the programs simplicity and health habit changing capacity. Dr. Guiñares and Governor Moreno confirmed themselves as ambassadors and champions of the project and affirmed a real “win-win”.

The German Development agencies InWent, GTZ and the Dutch WHO Collaborating Center Nijmegen, in cooperation with experts from the College of Public Health (UP Manila) are offering technical support and materials for immediate project kick start in all F1 provinces. Dr. Bella Monse, German CIM expert on school health promotion and working with DepEd since 5 years coordinates the project. All governors signed a pledge of commitment stating the full administrative project support and take over of financial responsibility in the future to ensure sustainability.



Attendees of the Governors' Meeting