

Ideas into ACTION Global Health Solutions

Leadership • Innovation • Alliances & Partnership

Fit for School – The Philippines

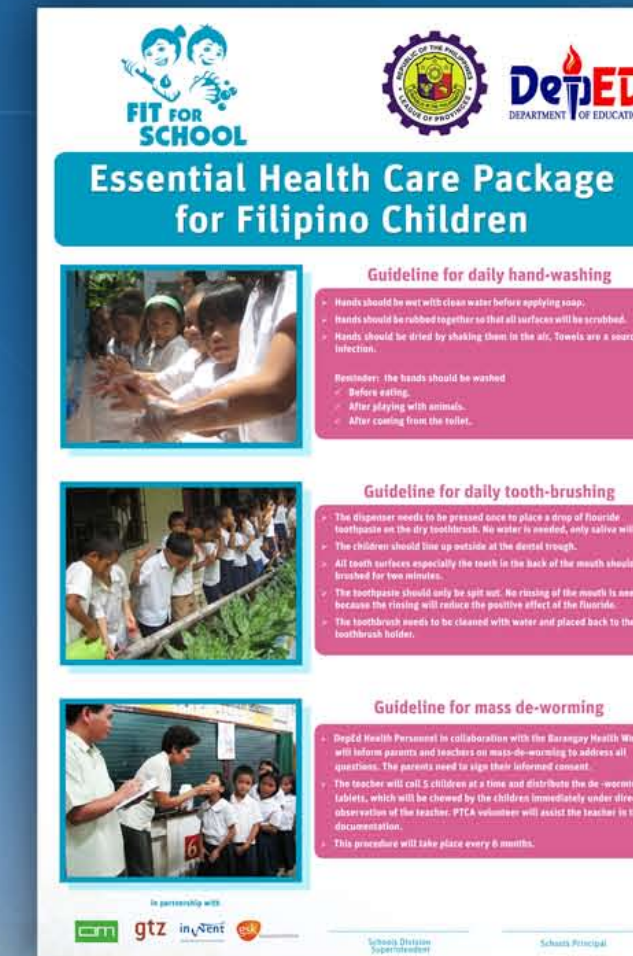
The *Fit for School* (FFS) program was established in response to the alarmingly high burden of preventable disease among Filipino school children. Designed and owned by the Department of Education in conjunction with the Philippine's League of Provinces and the Fit for School NGO, FFS is supported by the German development agencies CIM and GTZ and uses an innovative Essential Health Care Package (EHP) to tackle the most urgent health problems of school children. Combining daily supervised hand washing with soap, tooth brushing with fluoride toothpaste, and semi-annual deworming, the program integrates simple, evidence-based and highly cost-effective interventions on a mass scale to address the most prevalent diseases of children in the Philippines: respiratory tract infections, diarrhea, parasites, and tooth decay.

In existence for less than two years, the program has already impacted the lives of a million children and has become so successful that the Department of Education has decided to make it a national flagship program, with the goal of expanding it to reach 50% of Filipino school children by 2012.

The innovative cornerstone of the *Fit for School* concept is its use of existing facilities, and nonmedical personnel (teachers) to implement the EHP, thereby removing the traditional barriers between health and education. It has had positive effects on school and community infrastructure through improved access to water and sanitation. And by establishing healthy habits at an early age, the programme goes beyond the traditional aspects of behavior change through education. The running cost for supplies is around US\$0.50, making it highly affordable for local governments, who have agreed to cover these costs (the German donor agencies and other partners support capacity building for the program's implementation and management).

The *Fit for School* program addresses high-impact childhood diseases in a comprehensive yet simple and cost-effective way, offering a locally owned and managed solution that aligns with international policies in a new and pragmatic way. It is an example of an affordable, sustainable, and scalable solution, and other South-East Asian governments have shown interest in adopting similar programs.

The *Fit for School* concept brings public health back to a public place, —the school—, for the benefit of school children worldwide.



www.paho.org