

# WHO's Global School Health Initiative



A healthy setting for living, learning and working

**World Health Organization**  
Division of Health Promotion,  
Education and Communication  
Health Education and Health Promotion Unit  
Geneva, Switzerland





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## WHO's Global School Health Initiative

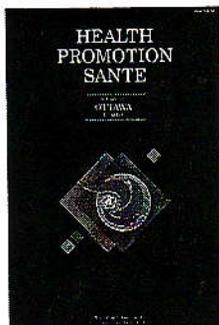
### BACKGROUND

The Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communication is charged with strengthening the World Health Organization's capacities to promote health through schools. It has a clear and comprehensive vision and a strategic plan to do so. The Division's Health Education and Health Promotion Unit maintains a school health team that serves as a secretariat to an intradivisional WHO Working Group on School Health. The school health team, Working Group and WHO Regional Offices work together, and with other relevant organizations, in creating WHO's Global School Health Initiative.

The general direction of WHO's Initiative is guided by the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) and the Declaration of the Fourth International Conference on Health Promotion held in Jakarta (1997). It is also guided by the recommendations of WHO's Expert Committee on Comprehensive School Health Education and Promotion (1995).

### Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion

The Ottawa Charter focuses WHO's Initiative on creating: 1) healthy public policy; 2) supportive environments; 3) community action; 4) personal skills; and 5) a reorientation of health services. It also focuses the Initiative on *creating* health as well as *preventing* health problems by calling for actions that enable individuals to: care for themselves and others, make decisions and have control over their life



circumstances and create conditions that are conducive to health.

### Jakarta Declaration for Promoting Health



The Jakarta Declaration focuses WHO's Initiative on creating *sustainable* health promotion programmes. Thus, the WHO Initiative calls for international, national, district and local actions to promote social responsibility, increase investments in schooling, consolidate and expand partnerships, build community capacity, empower individuals and secure an infrastructure for health promotion through schools. Such actions help to unlock the potential for health promotion that is inherent in all schools.

### WHO Expert Committee

WHO's Expert Committee on Comprehensive School Health Education and Promotion reviewed barriers to the development of school health programmes as identified by national, district and local education and health workers. Five broad barriers commonly identified at each organizational level are:

1. Inadequate vision and strategic planning.
2. Inadequate understanding and acceptance of programmes.
3. Lack of responsibility and accountability.
4. Inadequate collaboration and coordination among persons addressing health in schools.
5. Lack of programme infrastructure, including financial, human and material resources as well as organizing mechanisms.

Despite the barriers, WHO's Expert Committee found major reasons why school health programmes should be further

developed. The Committee concluded that there is a rich base of knowledge on which to act to develop and improve school health programmes. Furthermore, it concluded that *research in both developing and developed countries demonstrates that school health programmes can simultaneously reduce common health problems, increase the efficiency of the education system and advance public health, education and social and economic development in each nation.*

### Expert Committee Recommendations

To strengthen each nation's capacity *to improve health as well as education*, the WHO Expert Committee recommended two broad actions that must be supported at the local, national and international levels. They are:

- ▶ expanding investments in schooling
- ▶ expanding the educational participation of girls.

To promote health through schools, the WHO Expert Committee made three recommendations about what schools must do:

- ▶ provide a safe learning and working environment for students and staff
- ▶ serve as an entry point for health promotion and a location for health intervention
- ▶ enable children and adolescents to learn critical health and life skills.

The WHO Expert Committee also recognized that schools clearly need to support health promotion; thus, they made the following five recommendations:

- ▶ policies, legislation and guidelines must be developed to ensure the identification, mobilization and coordination of resources at the local, national and international levels
- ▶ teachers and school staff must be valued and provided with the necessary support to enable them to promote health
- ▶ communities and schools must work together to support health and education

- ▶ school health programmes must be well designed, monitored and evaluated to ensure their successful implementation and their intended outcomes
- ▶ international support must be further developed to enhance the ability of countries, local communities and schools to promote health and education.

Together, the Ottawa Charter, the Jakarta Declaration and the recommendations of WHO's Expert Committee on Comprehensive School Health Education and Promotion provide the foundation for WHO's Global School Health Initiative.

### WHO'S GLOBAL SCHOOL HEALTH INITIATIVE

WHO's Global School Health Initiative, launched in 1995, seeks to mobilize and strengthen health promotion and education activities at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Initiative is designed to improve the health of students, school personnel, families and other members of the community through schools.

### The Goal

The goal of WHO's Global School Health Initiative is to increase the number of schools that can truly be called "Health-Promoting Schools". Although definitions will vary, depending on need and circumstance, a Health-Promoting School can be characterized as a **school constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.**

A Health-Promoting School:

- ▶ strives to improve the health of school personnel, families and community members as well as students

- ▶ fosters health and learning with all the measures at its disposal
- ▶ engages health and education officials, teachers and their representative organizations, students, parents and community leaders in efforts to make the school a healthy place
- ▶ strives to provide a healthy environment, school health education and school health services along with school/community projects and outreach, health promotion programmes for staff, nutrition and food safety programmes, opportunities for physical education and recreation and programmes for counselling, social support and mental health promotion
- ▶ implements policies and practices that respect an individual's self-esteem, provide multiple opportunities for success and acknowledge good efforts and intentions as well as personal achievements.

#### Four Strategies for Action

WHO's Global School Health Initiative consists of four broad strategies:

#### Building capacity to advocate for improved school health programmes

WHO generates technical documents that consolidate research and expert opinion about the nature, scope and effectiveness of school health programmes. The materials are designed to help individuals in international, national and local organizations argue effectively for increased support of efforts to promote health through schools. They are also designed to help policy- and decision-makers justify decisions to increase support for such efforts. Basic documents include:

- ▶ *The Status of School Health*, WHO/HPR/HEP/96.1. *The Status of School Health* discusses the role of schools in promoting health and rationales for investing in a comprehensive approach to school health. It discusses major health problems that can be reduced through school health programmes,

implementation strategies and components of comprehensive school health programmes.

- ▶ *Improving School Health Programmes: Barriers and Strategies*, WHO/HPR/HEP/96.2.

This manuscript addresses barriers that impede local, national and international efforts to improve school health programmes. It

provides successful examples of specific local, national and international strategies, as well as six general strategies, that can be implemented to improve school health programmes.

- ▶ *Research to Improve Implementation and Effectiveness of School Health Programmes*, WHO/HPR/HEP/96.3. This text provides information regarding the kinds of research that can guide practice on school health environments, health education and health services. It discusses other research-relevant information such as indicators that can be used in planning, implementing and monitoring school health programmes, what is known about the cost-effectiveness of school health programmes and specific health-problem interventions that can be delivered through schools.

- ▶ *Promoting Health Through Schools: A Summary and Recommendations of WHO's Expert Committee on Comprehensive School Health Education and Promotion*, WHO/HPR/HEP/96.4.

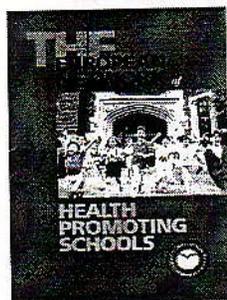
This document defines health education in the context of a Health-Promoting School and provides a rationale for each of the ten recommendations of the WHO Expert Committee. The full report of the WHO Expert Committee is available in the WHO Technical Report Series, #870.



To help individuals and groups advocate for the development of Health-Promoting Schools, WHO produces an "Information Series on School Health". Each document in the Series provides strong arguments for addressing one or more important health issues through schools, describes the concept and qualities of a Health-Promoting School and delineates multiple ways in which the health issue(s) is addressed in a Health-Promoting School. While each document in the Series addresses a priority health issue, it also focuses on the positive affects that will be accrued by the education sector if the issue is effectively addressed. Documents in this Series include:

- ▶ *Local Action: Creating Health-Promoting Schools*, WHO/HPR/HEP/98. *Local Action* assists school and community leaders in efforts that improve the health and education of young people. It provides practical guidance, tools and "tips" from Health-Promoting Schools around the world.
- ▶ *Strengthening Interventions to Reduce Helminth Infections: An Entry Point for the Development of Health-Promoting Schools*, WHO/HPR/HEP/96. Research and case studies have proven that schools are a remarkably efficient means to prevent and reduce helminth (worm) infections. This document describes how helminth reduction interventions can have a positive impact on children's health, learning potential and school attendance.
- ▶ *Primary School Physical Environment and Health*, WHO/School/97.2, WHO/EOS/97.15. This document identifies key elements for achieving a healthier school environment. It focuses on adequate services, particularly water and sanitation; operation and maintenance; and local motivation and ownership, with an emphasis on the physical environment of the school.
- ▶ *Violence Prevention: An Important Element of a Health-Promoting School*, WHO/HPR/HEP/98. This document explains how violence affects the well-being and learning potential of millions of children around the world. It describes how schools can begin to address violence through schools.
- ▶ *Healthy Nutrition: An Essential Element of a Health-Promoting School*, WHO/HPR/HEP/98. *Healthy Nutrition* describes how nutrition interventions in schools benefit the entire community, and how healthy eating contributes to health and well-being while also decreasing important health risks.
- ▶ *Preventing HIV/AIDS/STDs and Related Discrimination: An Important Responsibility of Health-Promoting Schools*, WHO/HPR/HEP/98. This document includes descriptions of HIV-prevention programmes that are effective in reducing the risk of HIV infection among young people. It explains why schools must accept the responsibility to educate their community members and work with them to determine the most appropriate and effective ways to prevent HIV infection among young people.
- ▶ *Active Living: An Essential Element of a Health-Promoting School*, WHO/HPR/HEP/98. This document shows how school age is the optimal time of life for individuals to adopt useful, pleasurable and satisfying physical activities as an integral part of their own daily life.
- ▶ *Tobacco Use Prevention: An Important Entry Point for the Development of a Health-Promoting School*, WHO/HPR/HEP/98. *Tobacco Use Prevention* demonstrates that comprehensive tobacco use prevention programmes in schools can effectively reduce tobacco consumption.
- ▶ *Life Skills Education: An Essential Element of a Health-Promoting School*, WHO/MNH/98. This document focuses on obtaining maximum results of life skills education by integrating it into the various activities and goals of a Health-Promoting School.

## Creating Networks and Alliances for the development of Health-Promoting Schools



WHO's Regional Networks for the Development of Health-Promoting Schools may be the world's most comprehensive and successful international effort to mobilize support for school health promotion. The first Network was initiated by the European

Regional Office of WHO, the Council of Europe and the Commission of the European Communities in 1991. This Network has grown in six years to include 34 countries, 500 core schools and 1 600 affiliated schools, reaching about 400 000 students.



In conjunction with the Global School Health Initiative, Regional Networks for the Development of Health-Promoting Schools were started in the Western Pacific (1995), Latin America (1996) and Southern Africa (1996) through joint efforts

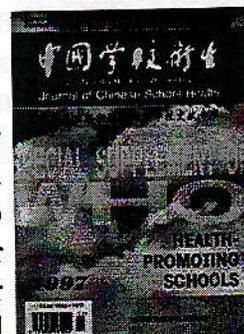
by WHO/HQ and the respective WHO Regional Offices. In 1997, meetings were held to develop Networks in South East Asia and the northern countries of the Western Pacific. Each Network will be composed of public and private organizations interested in planning and working together toward the goal of helping schools become Health-Promoting Schools.

Additionally, WHO works in alliance with Education International (EI), UNAIDS and UNESCO to enable teachers' representative organizations throughout the world to use their unique capacities and experience to improve health through schools. Special emphasis has been placed in strengthening policies, curricula and training programmes that can help prevent HIV infection and related discrimination. In 1997, teachers' representative organizations in

Asia and Central Europe were assisted by the WHO-EI-UNAIDS-UNESCO alliance.

## Strengthening national capacities

As part of the development of WHO's Mega-Countries Health Promotion Network, WHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USA) periodically brings together persons responsible for health promotion and school health from



countries with the world's largest populations. Participants exchange strategies and experience and work together to improve health promotion and school health programmes on a large scale.

In July 1997, meeting at the Fourth International Conference on Health Promotion in Jakarta, Indonesia, school health officials from the Mega-Countries agreed to jointly publish a manuscript describing national strategies for the support of school health promotion in their countries. They called upon WHO to help generate increased commitment for school health promotion by requesting that the Ministers of Education and Health each designate a policy-maker to work together in coordinating the resources of the two ministries in support of school health promotion. They also called upon WHO to convene a meeting of the ministers, their designees and representatives of UN agencies and other relevant international organizations to plan concerted actions that will build national capacities for school health promotion in the world's largest countries. WHO agreed to seek support for such an effort.

In 1997, WHO also provided technical support for country-level actions to create Health-Promoting Schools. WHO worked with China and South Africa to use priority health issues as entry points for the development of Health-

Promoting Schools. WHO worked with China to strengthen national and local capacities for helminth control and prevention and to strengthen HIV/STD prevention efforts in schools. WHO worked with South Africa to use helminth control and prevention and violence prevention as entry points. Experiences gained in these efforts are diffused through the Regional Networks of Health-Promoting Schools.

### **Research to improve school health programmes**

WHO consolidates existing research to strengthen knowledge about interventions that can improve health through schools. It also fosters the development of ways to: 1) assess national capacity for school health promotion; 2) evaluate the extent to which schools become Health-Promoting Schools; and 3) monitor the health status of children and teachers.

WHO's Rapid Assessment and Action Planning Process is being developed by the WHO Collaborating Centre to Promote Health Through Schools and Communities, Education Development Center, Inc., Newton, Massachusetts. The Process helps countries assess national capacity for school health promotion. WHO works with partner agencies to develop methods for evaluating the extent to which schools become Health-Promoting Schools and the extent to which students are practising healthy lifestyles. An evaluation of the extent to which helminth interventions could be used to create Health-Promoting Schools in China was completed in 1997. In the *World Health Report of 1998*, WHO will report on the health status and trends among school-age children and adolescents.

### **Partnerships and Support**

WHO recognizes that the success of the Global School Health Initiative rests on the extent to which partnerships can be formed at local,

national and international levels. This will require organizations interested in promoting health through schools to identify individuals with responsibility, time and authority to work in partnerships with others. It will also require them to jointly develop mechanisms that enable their organizations to plan and work together, document their achievements and improve their programmes.

The extent to which each nation's schools become "Health-Promoting Schools" will play a significant role in determining whether the next generation is educated and healthy. Education and health support and enhance each other. Neither is possible alone. Together, they serve as the foundation for a better world.

WHO is taking an active lead to ensure that the health promotion principles of the Ottawa Charter and the health promotion guidelines of the Jakarta Declaration are diffused worldwide and applied in the development of Health-Promoting Schools. The concept of Health-Promoting Schools is a sound vision for a better world. WHO's Global School Health Initiative invites all governmental and nongovernmental organizations, development banks, organizations of the United Nations system, interregional bodies, bilateral agencies, the labour movement and cooperatives, as well as the private sector to help advance health promotion actions as called for in the Jakarta Declaration by helping all schools become Health-Promoting Schools.

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*Organizations wishing to contribute to the work of WHO by supporting the WHO Global School Health Initiative and anyone desiring further information about the Initiative should contact Dr Desmond O'Byrne, Chief, Health Education and Health Promotion Unit (HEP), Division of Health Promotion, Education and Communication (HPR), WHO, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland 27. Telephone: (+41 22) 791 25 78; Fax: (+41 22) 791 07 46.*

## **Recommendations of the WHO Expert Committee on Comprehensive School Health Education and Promotion**

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**1**

Investment in schooling must be improved and expanded.

**2**

The full educational participation of girls must be expanded.

**3**

Every school must provide a safe learning environment for students and a safe workplace for staff.

**4**

Every school must enable children and adolescents at all levels to learn critical health and life skills.

**5**

Every school must more effectively serve as an entry point for health promotion and a location for health intervention.

**6**

Policies, legislation and guidelines must be developed to ensure the identification, allocation, mobilization and coordination of resources at the local, national and international levels to support school health.

**7**

Teachers and school staff must be properly valued and provided with the necessary support to enable them to promote health.

**8**

The community and the school must work together to support health and education.

**9**

School health programmes must be well-designed, monitored and evaluated to ensure their successful implementation and outcomes.

**10**

International support must be further developed to enhance the ability of Member States, local communities and schools to promote health and education.

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Geneva, Switzerland, 18-22 September 1995

## Expand Investment in Schooling

### Health-Promoting Schools focus on:



- ✓ Caring for oneself and others
- ✓ Making healthy decisions and taking control over life's circumstances
- ✓ Creating conditions that are conducive to health
  - Policies
  - Services
  - Physical/social conditions
- ✓ Building capacities for:
  - Peace
  - Shelter
  - Education
  - Food
  - Income
  - A stable eco-system
  - Equity
  - Social justice
  - Sustainable development



- ✓ Preventing leading causes of death, disease and disability:
  - Helminths
  - Tobacco use
  - HIV/AIDS/STDs
  - Sedentary lifestyle
  - Drugs and alcohol
  - Violence
  - Nutrition
  - Injuries
- ✓ Influencing health-related behaviours
  - Knowledge
  - Beliefs
  - Skills
  - Attitudes
  - Values
  - Support