

Reviving School Health Program in Tanzania

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Background: The National School Health Program (NSHP) is an integrated set of planned, sequential, school-affiliated strategies, activities, and services designed to promote the optimal physical, emotional, social, and educational development of students. Its strategy focused on childhood and adolescent behavior change practices while establishing systems within schools that promote health. It also provides opportunities for young students to protect and promote health through education, prevention, and early clinical interventions.

Method: Since 2016, PCI Tanzania, in collaboration with government stakeholders through the Food for Education (FFE III) program funded by USDA, has capacitated 231 schools in the Mara region to create/strengthen a structured platform and functional health clubs whereby pupils learn different health and nutrition topics. Despite the existence of capacitated health clubs and inclusion of school health issues in Tanzanian public policies, there were no particular structure/modality and standardized materials for integrating school-based health messages in schools which show the need for its development.

Result: Noting the gap, PCI collaborated with the Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and President's Office, Regional Administration, and Local Government to lead efforts developing standardized tools. The guide and manual with essential packages and methodologies are ready for piloting and then disseminated/adopted for use in Tanzania schools.

Conclusion and recommendation: The NSHP training manual serves a primary intention of providing standardized information to improve the quality of knowledge and skills while promoting positive actions to improve the health and well-being of school pupils, teachers, parents, and the surrounding community. Furthermore, implementation of the manual aims to reduce health-related absenteeism of pupils who were reported to be absent from school due to illness (MoEVT, 2013).

