

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## DepEd gets Procter & Gamble support for health program

Procter & Gamble (P&G) Philippines supports the Essential Health Care Program (EHCP) of the Department of Education (DepEd) to keep students healthy and improve their academic performance.

The EHCP promotes proper hand washing with soap, daily tooth brushing with fluoride and regular de-worming among school children.

“These low-cost preventive measures can cut by half the spread of infectious diseases and eventually lessen the incidence of school absences and dropping-out,” said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

P&G will augment the delivery of the EHCP in 3,791 elementary schools in eleven disadvantaged provinces, namely Aurora, Tarlac, Camarines Norte, Northern Samar, Eastern Samar, Sarangani, Mt. Province, Guimaras, North Cotabato, Zamboanga del Sur and Maguindanao.

Some one million children will receive annually hand washing kits. They will also learn about proper hand washing practices.

“We have long recognized the need to promote essential health care among our school children to reduce absenteeism. That’s why we continuously seek partners to help us sustain the drive for sound health practices in our schools,” Lapus stressed.

The project will also benefit 350,000 pupils annually from 1,168 elementary schools who will receive EHCP package and will be guided to practice proper brushing of teeth and hand washing. A total of 9,000 school teachers, heads and volunteer parents will be trained on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the project.

P&G’s entry into the project will contribute to the improved retention and completion of children in primary education by enhancing their health and well-being.

The partnership includes the United Nations International Childrens’ Education Fund (UNICEF) which has been contributing to the program through its Child Friendly Schools program that promotes healthy habits among children.

UNICEF is also implementing the Linis Lusog Kids project together with the GMA Kapuso Foundation where it improves water and sanitation facilities in schools. It collaborates with various donors to improve the water, sanitation and hygiene program in schools.

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The DepEd, through the Parents Teachers Associations and the Local Government Units, provide the hand washing facilities in the schools.

Approximately 85 per cent of school-aged children are currently enrolled. Out of 10 grade 1 pupils, only seven are expected to complete grade 6 and only five continue to high school.

DepEd believes that the state of health and nutrition is a factor with a direct effect on children's staying power and performance in school. Toothaches and diarrhea are among the common ailments causing children to miss school.

In a study by the DepEd and the UP College of Public Health, it was found that the poor health of Filipino children affects their attendance and performance in school. The study also showed that 97 per cent of 6 year olds and 81 per cent of 12 year olds have dental caries.

Research shows that school-based fluoride tooth brushing programs lead to about 40 to 50 per cent reduction in new tooth decay.

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