Report of the Sixth Annual Short Course on:

Strengthening Contemporary School Health, Nutrition and HIV Prevention Programmes

8 - 17 June 2010

Jointly hosted by the West African Centre for International Parasite Control (WACIPAC), the Eastern and Southern Africa Centre of International Parasite Control (ESACIPAC) and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD), Imperial College London.

Held at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research at the University of Ghana.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE OBJECTIVES</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE OUTLINE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEETING THE COURSE OBJECTIVES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 01: Strengthen global, regional, national and local partnerships.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 02: Strengthen capacity at the national level of both health and education sectors to support all SHN and HIV prevention programme components.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 03: Provide evidence-based messages for communications and advocacy to build political and financial commitment for the provision of SHN and HIV prevention programmes.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE EVALUATION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

On its 6th anniversary, the annual short course Strengthening Contemporary School Health, Nutrition and HIV Prevention Programmes was held for the second time in West Africa, in Accra, Ghana from 8th – 17th June 2010. It was hosted jointly by the West African Centre for International Parasite Control (WACIPAC) which is based at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research at the University of Ghana, with the Eastern and Southern Africa Centre of International Parasite Control (ESACIPAC) which is based at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and the Partnership for Child Development (PCD) which is based at Imperial College London.

This popular course brought together representatives from Ministries of Education, Health, and Social Welfare, the United Nations agencies and civil society to promote the sharing of good practices, knowledge and experiences in school health and nutrition (SHN) and HIV prevention, both between countries and across sectors.

This report summarises the debate and knowledge shared between the 56 delegates that participated in the 2010 international course from 14 African countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Sudan, as well as delegates from Bangladesh and Yemen.

The course placed a strong emphasis on building countries’ capacity and on strengthening regional partnering initiatives which seek to harmonize SHN and HIV prevention activities, thereby contributing to the achievement of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals. Facilitators with recognised expertise in SHN and HIV prevention assisted participants to draft country-specific operational log frames and to stimulate lively debates and discussions on current and ongoing issues.

Figure 1. shows that 82.26% of participants reported that the course helped them identify the most suitable solutions to their needs.

Course Objectives

1. Strengthen global, regional, national and local partnerships.

2. Strengthen capacity, at the national level, of both health and education sectors to support all SHN and HIV prevention programme components.

3. Provide evidence-based messages for communications and advocacy to build political and financial commitment for the provision of SHN and HIV prevention programmes.

Course Outline

1. Strengthen global, regional, national and local partnerships.

2. Strengthen capacity, at the national level, of both health and education sectors to support all SHN and HIV prevention programme components.

3. Provide evidence-based messages for communications and advocacy to build political and financial commitment for the provision of SHN and HIV prevention programmes.

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4Responses were rated on a progressive scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was the minimum and 5 was the maximum. 3 was the middle.

FRESH Declaration, 2000, p.3
During the course, participants, with the help of regional and international experts, examined different angles of contemporary SHN with an eye on global and regional dynamics. The course looked at the evolution of the FRESH framework (figure 2.), making reference to socioeconomic factors that, over the years, established the SHN concept as a social safety net across the region and as a new paradigm for social development.

The short course was an opportunity for participants to hear from world class experts about the latest evidence-based scientific research, and how this can drive development of the regional SHN agenda. Lessons learnt, challenges, and success stories shared, contributed to discussions, debates and productive group work.

Figure 2. The four pillars of the FRESH framework and its supporting strategies.

Meeting the Course Objectives

Objective 01: Strengthen global, regional, national and local partnerships.

Market Place

At this event, country team members, representing a variety of organizations and agencies from all over sub-Saharan Africa where given a stall upon which to exhibit different brochures, publications and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials associated with their school health, nutrition and HIV prevention activities. The aim of this session was to enable countries to disseminate knowledge, share information, and showcase examples of excellent SHN products. Similar to past courses the Market Place proved a highly popular event, with participants finding it a great opportunity for focused networking. This year many delegates decided to screen DVDs of their SHN projects on their laptops, generating informal discussions and networking in a pleasant environment with African music and local dishes.
Testimonies from course participants

”The course offered numerous opportunities to discuss formally and informally about work and progress made in our respective countries.”

”The market place evening was particularly useful for networking.”

”The course created opportunities to meet key SHN people at regional level which is a good way of networking.”

Thematic Group Sessions

Globally, countries are at different levels of implementing SHN programmes. Certain activities such as deworming or school feeding are emerging as increasingly important. The thematic sessions were an opportunity for course participants to hear about the latest evidence-based scientific research, and how this can influence the development of the regional SHN agenda. Discussing in smaller groups of experts, participants had the opportunity to talk about critical details of their programmatic activities.

Networking and greater engagement between sectors and across regions was one of the key outcomes of the thematic group sessions. Regional experts came together and shared knowledge, information and lessons learnt.

According to the evaluation report 81.63% of participants rated the thematic groups (figure 3.) as extremely useful in terms of enhancing their technical knowledge on SHN issues.

Figure 3.

”The thematic group helped me network with other colleagues in school feeding.”

”I managed to get some good documents from Malawi and had thorough discussions with delegates of Osun State, Nigeria on school feeding.”

”Working in thematic groups helped me come close to colleagues from other countries.”

Course participants
Objective 02: Strengthen capacity, at the national level, of both health and education sectors to support all SHN and HIV prevention programme components.

A number of activities were undertaken during the course that supported the achievement of the second course objective. These included technical presentations from distinguished facilitators on recent developments and good practices followed by focused discussions that highlighted knowledge gaps and consolidated technical inputs. The course agenda also included a 2-day field visit providing the participants with an opportunity to explore the reality of theories on the ground. Lastly, logframe development was introduced to the country teams as key steps for translating policy documents into programmatic and management activities.

The evaluation of the impact of the course with respect to objective 02 was particularly positive. Eighty-eight percent of participants found the new information acquired during the course extremely useful. Eighty-six percent of delegates agreed that the course was very relevant to their current

The majority of participants stated that they will formally share information and knowledge acquired from the course with their home country teams:

"Already planning a workshop with government and key partners upon return to share the log frame and develop the annual work plan with other partners involved in SHN."

"Through meetings at office level, district assembly level and possibly higher levels."

Field Visit

Participants travelled to Ada Foah, a fishing village on the coast of Ghana, to gain a sense of school level implementation of SHN programmes in relation to a checklist of key elements around the FRESH framework. The visit was made to three schools within the WACIPAC parasite control programme area with different levels of SHN school-based services available. Participants were advised to follow the 3L principle of Listen, Look and Learn (see Figure 3) to collect information and report back to the plenary session the day after.

Visits to contrasting schools enabled comparisons and generated vibrant discussions among participants. Health education programmes had been introduced in two of the three schools and the role of teachers in the dissemination of skills-based health education was also examined. Participants had the opportunity to talk to teachers and students and learnt more about their attitudes and understanding concerning the different health and nutritional conditions.

One group toured Pute Presby Primary School, focusing on the school’s water and sanitation efforts. Another group visited Elavanyo Primary School, currently one of the few schools in the area with a school feeding programme. The Deputy Headmaster noted that enrolment in this school increased dramatically since 2005 when school meals were first introduced. During the feedback session, the participants underlined that improved kitchen facilities would ensure the quality of the food served. Cooking in an open fire was not fuel efficient and posed a health threat to the catering staff.

The low fence surrounding the kitchen, the grass roof and the dirt floor were considered inadequate and below basic hygienic standards. Nevertheless, the delegates positively rated the school feeding programme which seemed to be achieving its targets of increasing enrolment, reducing dropout rate and improving pupils’ performance. The last group visited Ada Foah D/A School which was in the process of initiating a SHN programme.

Figure 4. 3L principle
The field visit culminated in a meeting with local leaders involved in the Dangme East District which seeks to link all stakeholders in the community and promote integrated and sustainable SHN programmes. From this dialogue, country participants reported strong community participation in school governance through School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), effective linkages between the District Assembly and Ghana Education and Health Services, and good collaboration between Community Directed Development Foundation (CDDF) and WACIPAC to provide SHN services.

Figure 5 shows that 73.91% of participants rated the field visit as excellent or very good.

**Picture 2. School meals programme in Ada Foah, Ghana**

![School meals programme in Ada Foah, Ghana](image)

**Figure 5**

![How valuable was the field visit to your understanding of the issues explored in the course?](image)
Inspiring Lectures
A variety of lectures from world class facilitators were offered throughout the course covering all aspects of the FRESH framework.

Health-Related School Policies
This session covered the processes, mechanisms, and partnerships needed to develop and enforce effective national policies and strategic plans. Participants discussed the necessary steps for the development of policies and action plans needed to create healthy school environments for all students and staff and to make school facilities a model of best practice for the whole community.

Safe Water and Sanitation
In this session, the role of school in improving sanitation and safe water supply for promotion of the health of schoolchildren was discussed. The country teams examined the effects that over abundance and/or lack of water may have towards poor sanitation in schools. The use of different latrines designs was also explored through comparisons.

Skills-Based Health Education
The education sector has played an increasingly important role in the prevention of HIV; good education is one of the most effective ways of helping young people to avoid HIV infection. This session examined why education is considered a "window of hope", a chance of a life free from AIDS. Providing young people with the "social vaccine" of education offers them a real chance of a productive life.

School-Based Health and Nutrition Services

Deworming and micronutrient interventions
This session began with a presentation of the burden of helminth infections among school-age children. This was followed by the presentation on school-based deworming programmes, and the WHO guidelines for mass deworming, which are often used to set up national deworming programmes. Examples from recent deworming activities and mapping exercises from The Gambia and Liberia were discussed.

School feeding and the link to local agricultural production
School feeding programmes provide an explicit or implicit transfer to households of the value of the food distributed. Governments focus on rolling out universal school feeding programmes as a productive social safety net. The Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) concept was explored specifically as a means of promoting agricultural development by using locally-produced food for school feeding. Delegates from the Osun State, Nigeria presented their school feeding programme which generated exciting debates.

Malaria prevention and treatment interventions
The impact of malaria on children’s mortality, school enrolment, cognitive function and educational achievement was assessed during this session. A toolkit on effective education sector responses to malaria, based on the four pillars mentioned below, was introduced: 1) Insecticide-treated bednets and personal protection measures, 2) presumptive treatment following teachers’ recognition of symptoms, 3) intermittent preventive treatment (IPT), and 4) mass screening and treatment. Again, the use of schools as entry points for community-based approaches was considered and rated by the participants as key to the success of SHN activities.

SHN Log Frame Development
Extensive consideration was given in teaching participants how to develop and manage SHN projects, focusing on the concepts of project cycle management and the logical links between resources, activities, outputs and objectives (see figure 6). Translating policy and strategy documents into programmatic terms is pivotal to the success of any intervention. Participants were introduced to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as a key process that enables practitioners to identify what has worked well and which are the main challenges. At the end of the course the country teams had developed draft log frames that they could take home to further elaborate and finalize.
Objective 03: Provide evidence-based messages for communications and advocacy to build political and financial commitment for the provision of SHN and HIV prevention programmes.

This was a critical component of the course concerned equipping participants with evidence-based advocacy tools to make the case for SHN programming within their ministries and among stakeholders in their home countries. Particular emphasis was placed on helping participants learn more about the evidence that:

- SHN interventions improve the quantity and quality of children’s education by improving enrolment, attendance, and cognitive performance and by decreasing dropout rates.
- SHN interventions improve children’s health by reducing infections and preventing diseases.
- Education interventions improve children’s health by changing behaviors e.g. acting as the “social vaccine” against HIV infection.

Participants received an array of different resources that could assist advocacy, ranging from briefing sheets and learned documents to films and awareness posters. An electronic library in the form of a CD with over 400 megabytes of relevant material was distributed to the participants.

Indicative list of publications that were handed out:


DVDs that were distributed included: Courage and Hope (2009), One Childhood (2008), and Window of Hope (2006) which were jointly produced by the World Bank, Irish Aid and PCD.

A major focus of discussion was the difficult issue of securing funding for activities. In recognition of the cost-effectiveness of deworming, the capacity to benefit those in most need and its potentials to contribute to EFA as an entry point to SHN, participants were briefed on the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) mechanism using The Gambia as a case study. Delegates were equipped to campaign for political support and financial commitment.

In the question: Do you think that the technical knowledge acquired during the course will enable you to increase SHN and HIV Prevention national budgets? 45.61% of participants rated their answers with 5 points (maximum) and 28.28% with 4 points.
Course Evaluation

While each year, clear feedback on the impact of the course is received, the 2010 course re-orientated its evaluation towards a more outcomes-oriented methodology. It focused on more explicitly defining the elements of a successful course and translating these into measurable goals and clear indicators to be evaluated 6 and 12 months post-course. Immediate feedback was gathered from a detailed evaluation form completed by 51 participants on the last day of the course.

Figure 7. shows that 98% of participants rated the course as either very good or excellent.

Testimonies

"The training that I underwent in Ghana, Accra will help me when I go back to my country to improve the existing coordination between the different ministries, for example, between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, promote planning and implementation, and make sure that the learners in our schools benefit and perform better in class and realise the dream of securing Education for All."
Albert John Saka, Chief Nutrition and HIV and AIDS Officer, Ministry of Education, Malawi.

"Honestly speaking this is one of the most interactive courses I have attended of recent. I look forward for more of these in the nearest future."

"This course is almost equal to a diploma."

"I have taken a great deal from the course both in terms of my personal development and potential academic direction following inspirational lectures."

Course Participants
For further information or to download the training course material, please refer to the following websites:
www.schoolsandhealth.org and www.child-development.org

Or alternatively contact:

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