



GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE



SCHOOL HEALTH CLUBS IN GHANA

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1. Introduction

The School Health Education Programme (SHEP) has been running since 1992 as a major programme of the Ghana Education Service (GES). The goal of the programme is:

“ensure the provision of comprehensive health and nutrition education and related support services in schools to equip children with basic life skills for healthy living, which will lead to improvements in child survival and educational outcomes, including school enrollment, retention and academic performance”.

To bring this goal to fruit, the SHEP has in place structures that cascade from the national level to the school level to ensure that the programme goal is translated into actions and activities which are implemented to the benefit of the school pupil. At the school level, the School Health Committee provides direction to the individual school on what focus and priority areas the school will take in implementing the SHEP. This is done with consideration to local conditions and challenges. School pupils normally are at the receiving end of the stick and are treated as pawns in the implementation of issues related to their health.

The School health club is a vehicle that empowers pupils to play an active role in deciding and implementing issues related to their health when they are in school. The Club also affords the pupils the opportunity to become ‘Agents of Change’ who carry home and translate into action healthy habits and information they learn at school and in this way influence their sibling, parents and friends who might be out of school.

This document is intended to give general directions to basic schools in setting up and running a School health club. The guidelines provided here are universal and are applicable to all basic schools no matter where they are located:- urban, per-urban, rural. The guidelines are also set within the context of the SHEP and as such any Basic and Senior High School implementing the SHEP should be able to apply them without difficulty.

2. School Health Club Activities

What is the School health club

The School health club is a voluntary grouping at the school level in which pupils meet, with the supervision of their teachers to learn, discuss and take action on issues related to their health and wellbeing whilst they are in school. The focus of the club is primarily on the health of the pupils with emphasis on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). The WASH Club is a recognized school level grouping at the basic school level and all schools across the country are encouraged to form one in their school.

Why have a School health club

Children spend more than five (5) hours of each school day in school. This makes the school an important place through which their health can be influenced positively. The health of children whilst they are in school is important because they are in their formative age and poor health will impact negatively on growth and development including the child's ability to learn. Poor health affects school attendance and completion rate. Good health enhances academic performance in school. The SHEP provides a framework for children's health issues to be addressed whilst they are in school. The concept of School health clubs is to provide children an avenue to organize themselves to learn about issues that affect their health which enables them make informed decisions.

What are the Objectives of the School health club

The overall goal of the School health club is to promote effective learning in school through supporting pupils to increase their knowledge and understanding of health issues that affect them directly and guide them to adopt positive behaviours to prevent poor health. The specific objectives of the Club are:

- to promote hygienic lifestyles amongst pupils
- to increase pupils knowledge and understanding of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene issues
- to promote a healthy school environment
- to encourage outreach to the home and community
- to challenge children to take up leadership roles and responsibilities

5 Easy Steps to form a School health club

The School health club is primarily formed at the Basic and Senior High school levels. Any Basic or Senior High school in the country can form and run a School health club. Follow these simple steps to form a School health club in your school.

1 Awareness creation with Staff and Pupils

The Head teacher and the School Health Team – (i.e. the School based Health Coordinator and two other teachers on roll) brief other teachers about the formation of the Club and get their commitment to support the Club and its activities. Even though not all staff members might be directly involved in the School health club affairs, it is important that every teacher on roll understands, supports and encourages the activities of the Club. The intension to form a School health club in the school should also be announced to pupils.

2 Announce the Formation

When the necessary sensitization has been done, the School based Health Coordinator, announces the establishment of the Club in the school during a morning assembly and invites interested pupils to register as members.

3 Register Interested Pupils

Class prefects in each class should be tasked to take down names and ages of all who wish to be members of the Club. At the close of each school day, the School based Health Coordinator and other members of the School health Team collate the names of pupils who have indicated membership from all the class prefects.

Membership of the School health club is open throughout the school year. Subsequent to the initial registration, a pupil can always register to be a member at anytime during the school term. To do this, the pupil only has to mention it to the School based Health Coordinator and their name will be put on the register. Once the name appears on the register, the child is a member of the Club.

4 Announce First Meeting

One week after the first announcement, the School based Health Coordinator should announce the date and time for the first meeting of the School health club. This should be done at both morning and closing Assemblies. Pupils should be reminded of the meeting again before the meeting date.

Once the first announcement is made, it is important to keep reminding and encouraging pupils to register with the Club.

5 Conduct First Meeting

Conduct the first Meeting of the School health club. On the scheduled date and time, hold the first meeting of the School health club. The School Health Team should work with some of the pupils who have registered to get the meeting place ready. The first meeting of the Club should be conducted by the Head teacher and the School Health Team members. This is to show they find this initiative important and also because at this time, the Club members have not elected any leaders and they have very little information to conduct a meeting on their own.

Conducting the First Meeting of the School health club

The first meeting is an introductory one. The Head teacher and the School based Health Coordinator should take time to explain the importance and the objectives of the School health club. The modalities for the club's operation should be explained clearly. This involves letting pupils know about meeting days, election of Executives, potential activities of the School health club, Patrons of the Club and benefits of being a member of the Club. Minutes should be taken and the register marked. Let the Club members know that in the next meeting, they will elect five (5) Executive positions as follows:

- *Club President*
- *Club Vice President*
- *Club Porter*
- *Club Secretary*
- *Club Organizing Secretary*

Pupils should start thinking about who in the Club they can elect to play these roles in readiness for the election. In a JHS or Basic school, Executives should not be taken from the final year class (JHS 3).

Close the meeting with a clear announcement of the next meeting.

Who can join the School health club

All pupils in the school qualify to be members of the School health club. This applies to both boys and girls. The Club needs members to survive and be active so it is important that at all times, an effort is made to get more pupils to join the Club. Membership of the School health club should always be open at all times – a pupil can join at anytime during the term. Unless school authorities have concerns about academic performance, a pupil can be a member of the School health club and at the same time a member of another club in the school. The school authorities should ensure that the club represents the whole school population with regards to age, gender, socio-economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

The members of the School Health Team are automatic members of the School health club.

Size of Membership

There are no restrictions on the size of the Club. The School health club is open to as many pupils as possible who want to join once they are pupils of the school.

The Different Types of School health club Members

The School health club has many different types of members:

- **Regular Members:-** these are the normal registered members of the Club. Club executives are elected from amongst the Ordinary members. Ordinary members are expected to take part in all Club activities and contribute to the sustenance of the Club:
- **Associate Members:-** these are adults who support the School health club in diverse ways. They can provide financial support, material support, technical or professional support. Parents, health workers, NGOs, businesses and corporate bodies who support the School health club in any way are Associate members of the Club.

How long can a Pupil be a Member

A person can be a member of the School health club for as long as they are pupils of the school. If a pupil moves to a different school, they can join the School health club in their new school. However, they cease to be members of the Club in their old school.

Club Executives

The Club has five (5) Executive members. These are the Club President, Club Vice President, Club Secretary, Club Organizing Secretary and Club Porter. The Club President or the Club Vice President and any other two (2) members present form a quorum to start a meeting and also take a decision. Decisions of the Executive committee should be determined by a simple majority vote.

Executive members of the Club can hold their positions for a period of one (1) academic year and depending on their class, they are eligible to be re-elected. Pupils from junior classes should also be given the opportunity to lead the club. Positions should not be restricted to seniors alone (see Appendix).

Club Patron

The three members of the School Health Team are the Patrons for the Club. They will be led by the School based Health Coordinator.

Meetings

The School health club shall hold 'Activity', 'Executive' and 'Emergency' meetings. 'Activity' meetings are the regular meetings of the Club. The Club will hold an 'Activity' meeting every week during each school term. Executive meetings will be held by the Club Executives with the various Ministers in attendance once every month during the school term. Emergency meetings will be held in response to incidences that occur in-between Activity meetings and need to be responded to immediately.

Conducting School health club Meetings

All meetings (Activity, Executive and Emergency) shall be chaired by the Club President. At least one Honorary member should be present for each meeting of the Club. This applies to all three types of meetings. In the event of a vote however, the Honorary members do not have a vote.

Reminders of meetings should always be given about two days before each meeting. Morning and Closing assemblies can be used to announce the time and venue for the meeting. School health club meetings should be held immediately after close of school on the school compound.

The Patrons present would supervise the meeting and have oversight responsibility over the pupils during the meeting.

Minutes should be taken during each meeting. The Minutes should capture the salient issues of each meeting including any decisions taken and activities planned. Names and classes of members present in each meeting should be recorded (see Appendix).

Orientation for Club Executives

For most of the pupils, this would be the first time they are officially being put in a leadership position so it is important that they are given some basic orientation to enable them function properly as executives for the Club. The School based Health Coordinator should arrange and conduct the orientation for the Club executives. The orientation should cover three key topics as follows:

- Topic One: Functions of Club Executives
- Topic Two: Administrative tasks (planning meetings, calling meetings, recording meetings etc.)
- Topic Three: Conducting meetings and other Club activities

Documenting Club Activities

Once the Club is set up, the Head teacher should donate at least one exercise book to the Club. This exercise book should be used to document the School health club's activities. Part of the book can be used as a Register, another part can be used for the Club's Minutes.

As the Club is strengthened and becomes more established, different books can be used to record information related to the Club. The School based Health Coordinator should regularly check entries made into any records of the School health club. He/she should work with the Club's Executives to ensure that the Club's records are always updated.

The Club Secretary should keep all documents related to the Club. If the Club Secretary will have challenges keeping them safely, the Head teacher should create a small space in the school office for the School health club to keep its documents.

Planning School health club Activities

The School health club can involve itself with any water, sanitation and hygiene activity that fosters the health of the pupils and their parents. The SHEP has four intervention areas and the School health club's activities relate to three of these intervention areas as follows:

- Skills-based Health Education
- Disease Prevention and Control
- Safe and Healthy School Environment

The School health club can initiate action in any of these areas. The Club should also support any activity in these areas initiated in their school and if possible in the community as well. The Club does not necessarily have to undertake activities in all the intervention areas at the same time during a school term. It is advisable to always start small and with activities that are manageable for children. The School based Health Coordinator should work with the executive of the School health club to select activities.

A calendar of activities should be drawn at the beginning of each school term and discussed with all Club members and shared with all students. The School health club's activities should be sanctioned by the School Health Team.

Choosing Activities

When choosing activities for the School health club, consider if:

- the activities will help pupils learn more about the issue being addressed.
- there are things children can do in school, at home or in the community either on their own or in groups.
- the activities allow children to collect information, discuss and interpret information they have collected and plan to take action.
- children can do the activity on their own.
- there is enough time and resources available for children to do the activity.
- the activities are acceptable to parents and the general community.

School health club activities should not be presented in a derogatory manner. Pupils should be proud of participating in Club activities. The activities should always offer opportunity to pupils to learn something new or reinforce their existing knowledge and practices.

Generally, School health club activities should be treated as co-curricula activities and should be conducted after school contact hours. Some activities, like cleaning the compound, administering first aid, and hygiene education, however will happen naturally during school hours.

All pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, should be able to participate in the Club's activities. That means age specific activities should be designed.

The School health club should support the activities of other affiliated Clubs in the school like the 'Virgins Club', 'HIV Alert Peer Educators Sessions', 'SARA', Red Cross and others where they exist in the school.

Participation in Child and Youth Ambassadors Initiative

The Child and Youth Ambassadors is a joint school/community initiative that seeks to further build the capacity of children to take up leadership positions and advocate for improved water, sanitation and hygiene conditions not only in their schools and immediate community but also beyond. Each year, the School health club will provide people who will be groomed to become Child and Youth Ambassadors.

ANNEXES

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Roles of Various Executive Members

Club President

- *Calls and chairs meetings*
- *Oversees and directs the activities of the Club*
- *Plans activities of the Club*
- *Liaises with school authorities on issues concerning the Club*

Club Vice President

- *Supports the President to run the Club*
- *Chairs Club meetings in the absence of the President*

Club Secretary

- *Helps to plan and conduct Meetings*
- *Informs members about Meetings*
- *Takes Minutes during Meetings*
- *Keeps records of the Club's activities*

Club Organizing Secretary

- *Mobilizes members to participate in Club activities*
- *Supports Club President to organize Club activities*

Club Porter

- *Mobilizes members to participate in Club activities*
- *Keeps order during Club Meetings*
- *Ensures that members of all age groups are able to participate in Club activities*

Sample Format for recording Minutes of Meetings

(Name of School)
Minutes of School health club Meeting

Date:

Activity:

Start Time:

Close Time:

How many members Present:

Discussions/Activities Undertaken

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Decisions/Activities To Be Taken

Action By

- 1.
- 2.

Club Secretary

Club President

Club Activities

The School health club Meetings are Activity Meetings. What this means is that when the School health club meets, the meeting should not be a 'Talk Shop' rather, it should be activity based. Club members should be guided to do something practical during the meetings. The School health club could be involved in:

- communal work based activities like cleaning the school compound, helping clean the surroundings of the community's borehole, building a shed for the school canteen etc,
- games based learning activities that give club members the opportunity to learn WASH related issues and develop skills and improved behaviours.

The following pages contain a description of various games based activities that club members can be involved in.

Water Activities

Activity 1 What's in Your Water?

This activity helps children learn about how water can get contaminated and the types of diseases that people can get from drinking contaminated water. The activity is based on a short story, which can also be role played, followed by a discussion of the issues that come out of the story (or the role play). Subsequently, children are given time to explore their school and community and contaminated water bodies.

Activity 2 Safe Household Water Collection and Storage

This activity focuses on how water can get contaminated during collection and storage. It draws attention to fact that even if water is fetched from a clean source it can still get contaminated before it is used. The appropriateness of various water collection and storage containers is assessed by the children using a 'safe and unsafe practices chart'.

Activity 3 Who is Responsible?

This activity helps pupils understand and appreciate that protecting water from contamination is everybody's responsibility. Everybody, including children, have a role to play in maintaining a

clean water supply. This activity is a good starting point for planning what activities children can do around the water theme.

Activities 4 I drink Safe Water!

This is a collection of activities aimed at building children's attitude to drinking only safe water. During the activities, they learn the importance of safe drinking water and how to distinguish between safe and unsafe water. They also learn simple processes for treating water. The exercise has activities suitable for children as young as three (3) and as old as fifteen (15).

Activity 5 Wash and Drain

In this activity, children become aware of how different water sources in their communities are used and how some of the ways they use water affects quality and quantity of water available. They also learn how poor water use can affect their health and socio-economic situation. Children are encouraged to take steps to protect water sources.

- Activities 1 – 3 culled from A Manual for WASH Activities in Elementary School Clubs, Ministry of Education, Eritrea & UNICEF, 2010
- Activities 4 – 5 culled from The Joy of Learning, lesson plans on hygiene, sanitation, water health and the environment, IORC Water and Sanitation Centre Delft, The Netherlands, IRC 2005

Sanitation Activities

Activity 1 The Six F's

Based on the F-Diagram, this activity helps children learn about diarrhoeal diseases. The activity covers the transmission routes of diarrhoeal diseases and their prevention, signs and symptoms of diarrhoea and dehydration and how to prevent/treat it.

Activity 2 Building Blocks

This activity is aimed at changing attitudes towards latrines. It helps children develop a sense of pride in their school latrine and appreciate the importance of having household latrines. The

activity generally teaches children how latrines are built. Children are given a practical feel of how simple but good latrines are built with emphasis on disillusioning them that latrines are always expensive to build.

Activity 3 Wonderful Waste

This activity teaches children to appreciate a clean environment and also realize the potential of waste as a resource. Children learn about organic and inorganic waste and the effects of poor disposal practices. The activity also introduces children to recycling and reuse of waste.

Activity 4 School Compound Mapping

This activity involves children taking a second look at their school compound and finding out how WASH issues, especially sanitation ones are being handled in the school. Based on the mapping exercise, children make two maps of their school compound showing the present day situation and the second showing their vision of their school compound. The discussion helps bridge the gap between the two scenarios and identifies things children can do to improve sanitation on their school compound.

- Activity 1 – 3 curled from The Joy of Learning, lesson plans on hygiene, sanitation, water health and the environment, IORC Water and Sanitation Centre Delft, The Netherlands, IRC 2005
- Activity 4 curled from A Manual for WASH Activities in Elementary School Clubs, Ministry of Education, Eritrea & UNICEF, 2010

Hygiene Activities

Activity 1 Washing our Hands

This activity is designed for children to learn the importance of hand washing with soap and also develop the skill to practice hand washing with soap. Children learn through practical exercises that hand washing with soap is the most effective way to remove germs from the hands.

Activity 2 I am a ‘Well-Washer’

This activity uses various child-friendly methods to teach children the critical times for hand washing and how to wash hands properly. As part of the activity, older children also learn about the symptoms and consequences of faeco-oral transmission.

Activity 3 Clean is Beautiful

This personal hygiene activity draws children attention to the importance of good grooming. It introduces younger children to the various parts of the body and the common disease that can affect people when they don't keep themselves clean. Older children learn the transmission routes and prevention of these diseases. This activity can be followed by regular body inspections.

Activity 4 Our Teeth

This activity sheet teaches children about the teeth and how to care for them. A number of practical exercises, including how to make a simple brush stick and toothpaste, are suggested for children.

- Activity 1 curled from A Manual for WASH Activities in Elementary School Clubs, Ministry of Education, Eritrea & UNICEF, 2010
- Activity 2 – 3 curled from The Joy of Learning, lesson plans on hygiene, sanitation, water health and the environment, IORC Water and Sanitation Centre Delft, The Netherlands, IRC 2005
- Activity 4 curled from Our Teeth, Child to Child Activity Sheet 3.1, Child to Child Trust London UK