3. Health Promoting Schools in Fiji

With funding from the Korea International Cooperation Agency, WHO is working in Fiji with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts to expand and strengthen the Health Promoting Schools programme.

Since its start in late 2016, the three-year expansion project has now enrolled 204 new schools. Guided by the National Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, Health Promoting Schools focus on three priority areas: (1) water, sanitation and hygiene; (2) diet and physical activity; and (3) mental health and well-being, in line with the problems identified among school-age children in Fiji. Technical working groups, comprising representatives from key government departments and civil society organizations, have been formed for each area to provide guidance on approaches.

In the first phase, 89 schools in Suva, Lautoka and Nausori joined the programme. They underwent baseline assessments of the school environment and formed their own Health Promoting Schools steering committees. In total, 6500 students completed the questionnaire using tablet computers.

Students were measured for height, weight and haemoglobin levels. Primary school students were also asked to provide stool samples for assessment of soil-transmitted helminth infections. A summary of these baseline assessments has been provided to each school to plan interventions.

Starting in March 2018, the second phase of the programme added 115 schools across the remaining districts of Fiji. They are undergoing baseline assessments and will start planning interventions in late 2018.