

School hygiene programme expands nationwide



Participants gather at a signing ceremony for the programme in Vientiane last week.

Times Reporters

The second phase of the Regional Fit for School Programme is set to launch at primary schools across the country and will run until 2018.

The programme began in 2012 in 22 primary schools in Vientiane. Now the number of participating schools has increased to over 400 nationwide, benefitting over 42,000 children.

The programme's aim is to support the establishment of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) initiative in schools along with a monitoring system for better resource planning and to introduce the Fit for School approach to more schools in Laos.

The programme was explained during the signing ceremony of the programme held in Vientiane last week, according to a statement from

the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The agreement was signed by the Director General of the Ministry of Education and Sports' Pre-School and Primary Education Department, Dr Mithong Souvanvixay, and Director of the Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology of the South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, Dr Ramon Bacani.

The agreement was also signed by GIZ's Principal Advisor of the Regional Fit for School Programme, Ms Nicole Siegmund. The programme is implemented by GIZ in the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia and Indonesia.

Dr Mithong said the programme was important to give feedback to parents on the results and appropriate measures to improve identified

health problems.

The experiences gained and the positive results helped to develop effective implementation templates and materials, which will now be used by the ministry for scaling-up the programme in Vientiane and other areas of the country.

The programme was commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, which has been supporting the education and sports ministry in Laos since December 2011.

Under the programme, two districts – Sisattanak in Vientiane and Thaphabath in Borikhamxay province – are now implementing the programme in all their public and private primary schools, GIZ said.

Fit-for-school model schools have been established in all provinces of Laos and serve as good practice examples for other primary schools in their district and province.

Fit-for-school is a Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene programme aimed at preventing infectious diseases among primary school students and improving school attendance.

It is based on three simple and low-cost interventions, including daily group handwashing with soap; daily group tooth brushing with fluoride toothpaste; and bi-annual deworming.

These interventions are meant to address hygiene deficiency-related diseases, such as diarrhoea, respiratory infections, worm infections and dental caries that many children in Southeast Asia still suffer from.