



Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools: First Meeting and Constituent Assembly

26-28 November 2001
Bridgetown, Barbados

Introduction

The initiative to strengthen health promotion and health education in schools with a more comprehensive perspective, as outlined by the Health-Promoting Schools Initiative, was proposed and accepted at The First Meeting and Creation of the Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools held in the Office of Caribbean Program Coordination in Bridgetown, Barbados. The Meeting was attended by representatives of the education and health sectors of 14 countries, who identified the areas demanding the greatest support and formulated recommendations to implement the Initiative (PAHO/WHO, Series HSS/SILOS No. 37, 1995).

One of the principal recommendations was to strengthen the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Programs through the development and/or strengthening of health promotion and health education strategies and activities, placing strong emphasis on: *comprehensive health education, including life skills training; healthy schools environments and surroundings; and on health services and nutrition*. In undertaking this Initiative, the schools, communities, and local health services, within the context of healthy municipalities and communities, assume the commitment to strengthen and exercise their capacity to develop health promotion knowledge, attitudes, and practices, and to prevent risk factors and conditions in school age children and adolescents.

The European Network of Health-Promoting Schools

The Network of Health-Promoting Schools came into being as a result of the recommendations made by the European Conference on Promotion of Health Education (Strasbourg, 1990). Experts in health and education, as well as politicians and researchers, noted that strengthening health promotion and health education in schools required the implementation of various activities and mechanisms to promote the exchange of experiences and information. An Initiative was subsequently proposed to form and strengthen a Network of Health-Promoting Schools, to foster the adoption of conceptual and operational strategies to improve the health of the entire educational community: students, teachers, parents, and workers in the education sector.

In European countries, this common effort won the support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Council of Ministers of the European Community. This support encouraged the introduction of health education in the schools, helped to form a rational framework for innovation, fostered equitable redistribution of the resources available for health promotion and health education, and allowed for the dissemination of exemplary practices. In 1993 the

First Meeting and Constituent Assembly

European Network of Health-Promoting Schools was formally established (ENHPS), with hundreds of participating schools in 27 countries.

Since its establishment, the ENHPS has scored several successes that have attracted an increasingly growing number of schools in several countries. This has been achieved through a series of activities, including the following:

- technical and administrative assistance in the areas of health promotion, health education, and organizational development;
- the exchange of information at periodic meetings of national coordinators, representatives, and student leaders, and through the creation of a database that maintains the Network's development process up-to-date;
- training workshops and seminars for coordinators, teachers, student leaders, and parents;
- the accumulation of funds through financial support provided by various sources, which are used in activities to benefit the Network;
- the dissemination of educational materials in the schools to promote health and healthy lifestyles;
- the designation of focal points to maintain communication with various national and international institutions in the health and education sectors;
- the promotion of opportunities to share experiences with other institutions that participate in the Network and share similar concerns; and
- the publication of the ENHPS Newsletter with the active participation of students in schools belonging to the Network.

The Latin American Network of Health-Promoting Schools

The experience of the European Network served as a point of departure for the development of the Latin American Network of Health-Promoting Schools (LANHPS).

The formation of the LANHPS, which took into account the cultural identity of the countries of the American Region, seeks to attain objectives similar to those of its counterpart on the European Continent. Several factors were considered in setting up and for maintaining such a Network, including: keeping the Network as decentralized as possible while maintaining a flexible organization that would ensure effective management and coordination. The establishment of the LANHPS included the following activities and actions:

- the constitution of an Inter-American Committee whose Secretariat duties could rotate to all the Member Countries;
- agreement on the guiding principles and the Terms of Reference of the Network and on the commitment of the countries and the schools;
- the appointment of two Coordinators in each Member Country, one from the education sector and the other from the health sector;

First Meeting and Constituent Assembly

- the formulation of criteria for membership in the Network and for the recognition of countries and schools;
- agreement on the functions of the Secretariat and of the Coordinators;
- the creation and updating of a directory of the Member Countries and schools; and
- the implementation of the Constituent Assembly and the organization of annual meetings of national Coordinators.

Schools requesting membership in the Latin American Network of Health-Promoting Schools must commit themselves to promoting, developing, implementing, and evaluating (process and impact) the Initiative's activities.

Objectives of the Latin American Network of Health-Promoting Schools

1. Facilitate the formation of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of good nutrition and healthy lifestyles in students and other members of the educational community;
2. provide students with the essential abilities and skills for making responsible decisions with regard to their personal health that will contribute toward the development and the safety of their surroundings;
3. make possible full physical, psychological, emotional, and social development, in addition to high self-esteem and a positive self-image among students and in the entire educational community;
4. promote health and healthy lifestyles and provide students and educational workers with options for learning, gaining experience, and living in healthy environments and surroundings;
5. develop a sense of responsibility and a commitment to individual, family, and social participation in actions to improve health;
6. promote positive and constructive relations among all the members of the educational community and encourage care for the environment and the surroundings;
7. expand the concept of health services and good nutrition in order to transform them into educational resources that support learning and assist the community in using the health systems and services in a rational manner;
8. provide an environment and framework for work and study that promote health, taking into account the conditions of school buildings, the availability of water, the health and nutrition services, sports and recreation, and the concept of safety for all;
9. formulate clear-cut objectives for the promotion of health and safety for the school community.
10. integrate health promotion and health education into the school curricula in a rational manner through the use of methodologies that facilitate the participation of students in the educational process; and
11. identify and employ the resources available in the community to carry out health promotion and health education activities.

Terms of Reference for the Latin American Network of Health-Promoting Schools

- Promote the concept of the Health-Promoting Schools Initiative;
- strengthen the institutional capacity for the development of school health programs with a gender appropriate approach to insure that there are no disadvantages for female students;
- create a forum to exchange experiences and insure continuation of the activities;
- promote training programs for the development of skills for the health and education personnel;
- promote the development and exchange of innovative, creative, and effective educational materials;
- promote the use of participatory methodologies that facilitate the “education of intelligence and not the memory”; and
- promote the communication within and among Network participants, using electronic means whenever possible.

Functions of the Latin American Network Secretariat

- Disseminate pertinent and relevant information at the regional level and in each Member Country;
- provide technical and administrative assistance in the areas of health promotion, health education, and organizational development;
- exchange pertinent and relevant information (meetings, encounters, database);
- organize training workshops and seminars for coordinators, teachers, student leaders, and parents;
- reorient human, physical, and financial resources so that every institution can make better use of the means available;
- exchange and disseminate to schools educational materials that promote health and healthy lifestyles;
- interact with national and international institutions working in the health and education sectors; and
- publish a newsletter with the active participation of students in schools belonging to the network.

The Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools

The experience of the European and Latin American Networks served as the base of departure for the development of the Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools (CNHPS).

On November 26-28, 2001, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) convened a meeting of Caribbean school health and education professionals. This meeting, held at the PAHO Office of Caribbean Program Coordination in Bridgetown, Barbados, brought together key representatives from the Ministries of Health and Education in 14 Caribbean countries, as well as other international and regional experts in the field of school-health promotion.

During the three-day meeting, designees from each of the participating Caribbean countries described their countries' status, trends, and experiences in implementing school-health programs and activities. Invited presenters from various international and regional organizations gave presentations on critical issues to consider when implementing activities within the context of the Health-Promoting Schools Initiative. Charles Gollmar, representing the World Health Organization (WHO), provided an overview of WHO's school-health initiatives worldwide and discussed available methods and surveillance instruments for assessing risk factors in school-age children. Dr. Josefa Ippolito-Shepherd from The Health-Promoting Schools Regional Initiative, PAHO/WHO discussed the background of the Health-Promoting Schools Initiative in the Americas. Pat Brandon from the PAHO Office of the Caribbean Program Coordination, PAHO/WHO set the regional stage for the meeting, sketching those aspects of Caribbean life that influence the promotion of health in young people, and discussing the evolving role of schools in promoting health and development, and especially describing the Health and Family Life Education Program in the Caribbean.

Drs. Benjamin Puertas, Antonio Saéz, Lourdes E. Soto de Laurido, and Eng. Leo Nederveen described the experiences of Health-Promoting Schools and Networks in Latin America, Spain, and Puerto Rico, in an effort to share the wisdom of other countries and regions that have developed similar initiatives. Dr. Puertas discussed key communications strategies used by the Latin American Network and also presented an innovative program "Prosamusica" that uses music to teach health and hygiene skills to children in the Andes. Dr. Saéz described the innovative School-Health Promotion initiatives in Spain and emphasized the importance of communication and technology to enhance programs and make information-sharing easier. Cheryl Vince Whitman described the Rapid Assessment and Action Planning Process (RAAPP), a method for countries to assess their capacities to deliver school health programs and interagency planning and action.

During the second half of the meeting, following the series of country reports and technical presentations, the participants worked diligently to begin creating the CNHPS. Working first in small work groups and then with their colleagues at large, the participants formulated the vision, mission, objectives, example activities, terms of reference, plan of action, and an initial organizational structure for the CNHPS, including responsibilities for the CNHPS Focal Point and of the country representatives. At the close of the meeting on November 28, 2001, 27 representatives from 14 Caribbean countries signed a Statement to establish the CNHPS, witnessed by 13 representatives from international and regional agencies.

Vision of the Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools

Healthy communities through Health-Promoting Schools across the Caribbean

Mission of the Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools

The CNHPS will share knowledge, skills, and resources within and among Member Countries and build and/or strengthen alliances with regional and international agencies and institutions to gain support for and build the capacity of the Health-Promoting Schools Initiative.

Objectives of the Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools

By the end of the year 2002, the CNHPS should be able to:

1. support countries in improving and strengthening Health-Promoting Schools Initiative;
2. facilitate ongoing communication between and among member countries, related agencies and individuals;
3. strengthen the capacity of government ministries to work together to foster Health-Promoting Schools Initiatives;
4. establish common and complementary activities in collaboration with CPC/PAHO, CFNI/PAHO, PAHO-PWR Offices, HPP/HPF/HED/PAHO-HQ, WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDCP, FAO, and other technical and funding agencies;
5. build and strengthen alliances among all stakeholders within Member Countries to advocate for and promote the HPS Initiative in the Caribbean; and
6. facilitate the development or adaptation of Health-Promoting Schools policies

Terms of Reference of the Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools

The CNHPS will serve the Caribbean Region to:

- build the capacity to advocate for Health-Promoting School communities;
- create alliances for the development of Health-Promoting Schools within and among the countries;
- mobilize resources for sharing within and among the countries;
- strengthen national capacities;
- initiate and coordinate research to improve school health programmes;
- publish research findings;
- foster the production of publications and resources;
- establish criteria for Health-Promoting Schools; and
- monitor and evaluate Health-Promoting Schools programmes.

Plan of Action of the Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools

The following is a plan of action proposed to formalize the newly created CNHPS:

1. Notify government and stakeholders of the creation of the CNHPS (*soon after meeting and ongoing*);
2. ratify and obtain formal agreement for the creation of the CNHPS (*soon after meeting*);
3. continue with the development of the organizational structure of the CNHPS – work is to be continued by the CNHPS Focal Point and Advisory Board (Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, Dominica), CPC/PAHO, CFNI/PAHO, PAHO-PWR Offices, and CNHPS Technical Secretariat (*first quarter of 2002*);
4. advocate for the development of National Health-Promoting Schools Networks among key stakeholders and interest groups (Ministries of Youth, Sports, Human Services, Social Development, etc.) (*soon after meeting and ongoing*);
5. develop and distribute the CNHPS Newsletter (*first semester of 2002*); and
6. conduct Second Meeting of CNHPS (*by November 2002*).

Organizational Structure of the Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools

A preliminary Organizational Structure for the CNHPS was drafted by the end of the meeting on November 28, 2001. The participants agreed that an Advisory Board be established to provide support to the newly appointed CNHPS Focal Point, consisting of representatives from Barbados, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, CPC/PAHO, CFNI/PAHO, PAHO-PWR Offices, and CNHPS Technical Secretariat, who will continue to work to further develop and clarify the organizational structure of the network.

The Organizational Structure of the CNHPS has two levels:

1. *International level*, composed of the CNHPS Focal Point, the Technical Secretariat (HPP/HPF/HED/PAHO-HQ and Focal Points from CPC/PAHO, CFNI/PAHO, and other PAHO-PWR Offices), and specially created Work Groups/Committees.
2. *National level*, composed by Functional Committees (Mixed Commissions) of each Member Country, which are the Coordinators for the countries' Health-Promoting Schools and for the networks

At the international level, the CNHPS Focal Point will lead, manage, and coordinate the CNHPS's activities. The first CNHPS Focal Point will be based in Barbados and will rotate every two years to other countries (see chart below). The first CNHPS Focal Point will be led by Erdiston's Teachers' College, Barbados, with technical and administrative support from the Advisory Board (representatives from Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago), the CNHPS Technical Secretariat, CPC/PAHO, CFNI/PAHO, and other PAHO-PWRs Offices.

First Meeting and Constituent Assembly

Years	CNHPS Focal Point	Advisory Board
2002 – 2003	Barbados	Dominica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago
2004 – 2005	Bahamas	
2006 – 2007	Trinidad and Tobago	

No special Work Groups/Committees were formed at this first meeting, except for the specially created Advisory Board to the CNHPS Focal Point.

The CNHPS Technical Secretariat will provide technical and administrative support to the national networks to facilitate the work of the Networks and to interact with other national and international organizations that support the development of the CNHPS and their Health-Promoting Schools.

At the *national level*, each Member Country will form a Functional Committee (Mixed Commissions) to serve as the country's liaison to the CNHPS Focal Point and to the CNHPS Technical Secretariat. The Functional Committee will be comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and other government agencies (e.g., agriculture, sports, youth, social development, etc.), NGOs, PTAs, statutory bodies, media, universities/colleges, CBOs, student councils, youth groups, teachers unions, etc.

Member Countries can contact all members of the CNHPS, including the CNHPS Focal Point, the CPC/PAHO, CFNI/PAHO, PAHO-PWRs Offices, CNHPS Technical Secretariat, and international agencies directly to interact with one another, as needed and desired. Requests to PAHO-HQ, CPC/PAHO, CFNI/PAHO, and to other PAHO-PWR Offices will follow the standard procedures for requesting technical and administrative support for the strengthening of the CNHPS and Health-Promoting Schools related activities.

Responsibilities of Caribbean Network of Health-Promoting Schools Focal Point

1. Coordinate CNHPS activities;
2. inform regional bodies about process and progress of CNHPS;
3. process formal requests for technical and administrative support to the CPC/PAHO, CFNI/PAHO, PAHO-PWR Offices, and to CNHPS Technical Secretariat, including convening *ad hoc* meetings directed to strengthen the Network;
4. coordinate the development of the CNHPS Newsletter (with technical, administrative, and financial support of the CNHPS Technical Secretariat); and
5. encourage the development of the baseline data for the status and trends of the Health-Promoting Schools in the Caribbean Region (in collaboration with the CNHPS Technical Secretariat)

Responsibilities of Country Representatives

1. Establish a national Functional Committee or integrate into existing intersectoral committees, preferably cabinet-appointed;
2. ensure that the national Functional Committee has the following representation:
 - Government, e.g., health education, sports, youth, social development, planning,
 - NGOs
 - PTAs
 - Statutory bodies
 - Media
 - Universities/colleges
 - Community-based organizations
 - Student councils
 - Youth groups
 - Teachers unions
3. identify head of committee at the national level with relevant support (e.g., administrative and secretarial); and
4. convene a second CNHPS meeting between June and November 2002.