Major Accomplishments of SEAMEO RECFON’s Flagship Programs 2017-2019

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Introduction

SEAMEO RECFON (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education - Regional Centre for Food and Nutrition) has committed its expertise in generating knowledge, building capacities, and developing models and learning materials to enhance child and maternal health and nutrition in Southeast Asia as the focus of its Second Five-Year Development Plan (2017/2018 – 2021/2022). This commitment is translated through its two flagship programs, namely: Nutrition Goes to School (NGTS) and Early Childhood Care, Nutrition and Education (ECCNE). These programs are expected to contribute to addressing SEAMEO Priority Areas on Achieving Universal Early Childhood Care and Education, and Addressing Barriers to Inclusive Education.
**Nutrition Goes To School (NGTS) Program**

SEAMEO RECFON acknowledges that teachers are key players in cultivating good nutritional practices among children in the school setting. Thus, this program puts emphasis on building the capacities of teachers at various education levels using both offline and online modes. Training for teachers covers the topics on health and nutrition, school canteen, school garden, and school management. From 2017 to 2019, SEAMEO RECFON has trained more than 4,000 school teachers in Indonesia on these topics through face-to-face and online trainings.

To further promote health and nutrition education in schools through the NGTS Program, SEAMEO RECFON organized a **Youth CREATION (Creativity in Health and Nutrition) Competition**. The first competition was held in 2017 wherein participating teams of senior high school students and teachers in Indonesia were challenged to create videos on health and nutrition practices. The second competition was held in 2018 which was opened to schools in Southeast Asia and focused on creating video to advocate Zero Hunger in support of the Sustainable Development Goal 2.

SEAMEO RECFON has also produced five books based on its research to reinforce the capacity building activities of the NGTS Program. These books are in Bahasa Indonesia and titled *Gizi dan Kesehatan Remaja, Gizi dan Kesehatan untuk Anak Sekolah Dasar, Remaja Asik, Kantin Sehat Sekolah and Edukasi Gizi Berbasis Kebun Sekolah*. These books are can be downloaded from SEAMEO RECFON website ([https://www.seameo-recfon.org/en/publications/books](https://www.seameo-recfon.org/en/publications/books)). SEAMEO RECFON has received interests from other SEAMEO member countries to translate these books into their respective national languages.

From 2018 to 2019, SEAMEO RECFON conducted an action research to evaluate the NGTS program. The study was conducted to
assess the effectiveness of school-based nutrition promotion intervention as indicated in the NGTS DePPIS framework (Demand, Supply, School Policy, and Information System) towards nutritional status, physical fitness, and school performance of 658 high school students in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The study found that the NGTS program was effective to improve good breakfast behavior and could also improve nutrition knowledge, dietary diversity, nutrition status, physical fitness, and cognitive ability of students. However, many of these students are still lacking in their intake of some nutrients such as iron, zinc, folate, calcium, thiamin, riboflavin in their daily diets.

SEAMEO RECFON also continuously supports the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia on its program called Program Gizi Anak Sekolah (ProGAS) since 2016. SEAMEO RECFON is involved in providing technical assistance and conducting evaluation of the program in 2017-2018. The Centre also starts providing yearly online training to ProGAS school teachers on all aspects of NGTS.

For NGTS program scaling up in Indonesia, SEAMEO RECFON works with UNICEF Indonesia and the Government of Indonesia (through 4 collaborated ministries for School Health Program or “UKS” in Bahasa) for a program called Aksi Bergizi on adolescents’ nutrition and health targeting secondary schools including vocational schools and madrasah since 2018. The program is piloted in 62 schools in Klaten and 48 in West Lombok. In the same year, SEAMEO RECFON, GIZ Indonesia and SEAMEO Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (INNOTECH) committed to enrich the NGTS by incorporating components of WASH in Schools (WiNS) program such as water and sanitation aspect including school-based management especially in the primary schools. This NGTS-WINS collaborative program covers 7 priority schools in Bogor and Cirebon. The program will soon expand its coverage in the second semester of 2019 to other schools in other SEAMEO RECFON’s locus areas such as Bandung, Sambas, and Klaten.

To strengthen and help scale up the NGTS program in the SEA region, SEAMEO RECFON initiated the establishment of School-Based Nutrition Promotion (SBNP) Working Groups for Indonesia and Southeast Asia. The Indonesian SBNP Working Group was established in July 2018 and the Southeast Asian SBNP Working Group in March 2019. These Working Groups are expected to facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learned on impactful nutrition programs and provide evidences for sound policy decision making both at national and regional levels. Collaboration between GAIN Indonesia and SEAMEO RECFON to develop an SBNP website is one of the outputs expected from Indonesia SBNP working group in 2019. The website shall serve as a platform for sharing teaching-learning tools and materials, and other information related to SBNP program.
SEAMEO RECFON has also committed to foster vibrant involvement of various stakeholders for its Early Childhood Care Nutrition and Education (ECCNE) program. Initiated in 2018, this program is part of the previous focus laid in the Centre’s First Five-Year Development Plan (y 2011-2016) that is sharpened to contribute to the mitigation of stunting problem. Its goal is the achievement of a child’s full potential through optimal diet, health and childcare. SEAMEO RECFON collaborates with its sister centres, i.e., SEAMEO Regional Centre for Early Childhood Care Education and Parenting (CECCEP), and SEAMEO Regional Centre for Tropical Medicine and Public Health (TROPMED) Network in developing and implementing this program. Implementation of this program in Indonesia involves professional organisation (e.g., HIMPAUDI), and other government institutions (Community health center/puskesmas, BP PAUD Dikmas), and higher education institutions (Health Polytechnic).

The program’s initial activity was the mapping of the competency of Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers on health and nutrition. As of July 2019, around 17,800 teachers in Indonesia have been mapped. The program is developing local food-based recommendations to address specific nutritional problems in specific local areas. The recommendations become one of messages delivered during training of school teachers and parents.

One of the models developed by SEAMEO RECFON as part of the ECCNE Program is Nutrition in Emergencies (NiE) in response to the earthquake that occurred in Lombok and the tsunami in Palu. Natural disasters and other emergency situations are major concern for young children in Southeast Asia. The NiE model started in 2018 and has received the support of the six other SEAMEO Centres in Indonesia. The NiE model has resulted in two technical guidelines for ECC educators and community nutritionist’s collaboration on ECCNE in disaster prone areas. The guidelines were then piloted in four districts in East Lombok for 6 months (February–August 2019). The related ministries and local government of West Nusa Tenggara have also supported this activity and willing to adapt the ECCNE modules in the long run. With the six other SEAMEO Centres in Indonesia joining in, the model has been expanded to address community resilience before and after disasters. Thus, it is now called Nutrition and Community Resilience in Disasters (NutriCoRD) Program.
SEAMEO RECFON conducts research to improve nutritional status and school performance of school-aged children to substantiate its NGTS and ECCNE Program activities. The Centre completed a total of 24 studies on NGTS and 16 studies on ECCNE in 2017-2019. These studies produced 23 manuscripts that have been published in international refereed journals. These studies were supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Health of Indonesia, partner-universities, and UN Agencies.

Research activities related to ECCNE program in the South East Asia region include formulation of Food-Based Recommendations which are ongoing in Myanmar in collaboration with Ministry of Public Health, in Lao PDR with Lao Tropical Public Health of Institute (LPTHI), in Cambodia with National Institute of Public Health (NIPH), and in the Philippines with the University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB).
SEAMEO RECFON established an internship program for senior high school/vocational school students since 2018. The program is designed for the students to have work environment exposure while also learning about health and nutrition in the process. Student interns are expected to share and practice the knowledge that they learned from SEAMEO RECFON. From 2017 to 2019, a total of 19 students from 4 vocational schools and 1 senior high school had completed their internships at SEAMEO RECFON. These intern students assisted SEAMEO RECFON staff in designing and developing several Centre learning and promotional materials such as posters, leaflets, infographics, and videos as well as performed documentation activities as photographer and videographer.