



Healthier Children and Communities – It's More Than a Game

Helping children reach their full potential through active play

Healthy lifestyles include more than good nutrition. It also involves active play. Physical activities such as sports, dance and games are an important component of the programs in all seven nations participating in the Mondelēz International Foundation (MIF) school-based programs that are profiled in this article. Whether they live in crowded cities or sparsely populated rural areas, children who are more active tend to also be healthier.

“If you want to grow up to be big and strong and capable... make sure you start figuring out how to incorporate exercise into your life in some way, shape or form.”
- ***Former U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama***

BRAZIL – Capturing the spirit of the Rio Olympics



Active play is a part of daily life in schools involved in the Ação Saudável (Health in Action) program. Teachers in the participating schools develop physical activities that can be incorporated into daily life, such as helping students tend to school gardens, another key element of the program.¹

Ação Saudável is a partnership of INMED Partnerships for Children, INMED Brasil, Mondelēz International Foundation, and the Instituto Esporte e Educação (IEE), an organization promoting sports and physical activity in low-income communities. The program operates in the states of Pernambuco, São Paulo and Paraná - states in the northeast and southeast regions of the nation identified as areas with strong potential to impact children in need.² It has engaged with more than 1,000 schools and is projected to reach more than 400,000 students in 14 communities in the three states.³

Teacher training is critical to lead and motivate students. Almost 700 teachers received training through the Health in Action program. IEE plays a key role in the program, collaborating with INMED and schools to help train teachers and evaluate students' performance and document program outcomes in physical activity.

“Our local coordinators with the schools come up with ideas,” says Joyce Capelli, Executive Director and President of INMED Brasil. Often, these ideas combine activity with exploration, learning and public service. For example, one northeast Brazilian school organized an all-day bicycle tour of the town for students.⁴ Another school decided to clean the neighborhood around the school, including a nearby canal into which people throw garbage.⁵ With Brazil hosting the Summer Olympics in 2016, Mondelēz Brazil and IEE launched a new initiative to capture the energy surrounding the Games. A Sports & Arts Caravan toured cities and towns, promoting active play and nutrition. The caravan - which included local athletes - reached 37 urban and rural schools and 6,000 school-age children.

¹ Ibid.

² Food and Nutrition Bulletin, vol. 35, no. 3 2014, Health in Action Program, Brazil. Emily Slater, Mary-Lynn Lasco, Joyce Capelli and Gabriela Pen

³ Telephone interview with consultant for MIF on Sept. 5, 2016

⁴ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 5, 2016

⁵ INMED Health in Action Quarterly Progress Report July 2016

CHINA – Active Play Benefits Students and Teachers alike



Students may have been ready to learn about being active, but teachers weren't quite ready to teach, at the start of Mondelēz Hope Kitchen - Nutrition & Healthy Lifestyles Program (MHK) in China. "We first trained physical education teachers, because 50 percent of [physical education] teachers in rural China are part-time, so we train them to increase quality and competence of the teachers," says Gu Lan, Director of the Chinese Youth Development Foundation (CYDF), lead partner for the

program.⁶ Elements of the training included calisthenics, gymnastics, basketball, acrobatics, designing sports games, and producing lesson plans.⁷

"We also gave the schools some physical exercise facilities to have them to exercise more," she says. Equipment provided included jump ropes, ping-pong tables, badminton equipment, various balls, basketball stands, hula hoops, and dumbbells.⁸

Additional program partners include the Chinese Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and MIF. Established in 2014 to promote healthy lifestyles, the program operates in 21 provinces and cities across a wide swath of China, benefiting approximately 80 pilot schools and 150,000 rural students.⁹ The MHK strategy is to guarantee that children have the opportunity to exercise one hour per day.

A 2016 endline survey of more than 5,100 elementary-school children at nine schools in Hebei, Hubei and Yunnan provinces showed substantial improvement over baseline results from 2014. The gardens – a key part of the MHK program – also connect with the physical activity goals. The students can enjoy the fun of farming and harvesting, and develop a good habit of loving physical work, just by planting their garden. "By encouraging [students] to participate in the exercise of [tending] the gardens, the students can observe and cherish nature," Lan says.¹⁰

⁶ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 28, 2016

⁷ MHK Program Report to MIF Aug. 31, 2016

⁸ MHK First Semi-Annual Report, Feb. 12, 2015

⁹ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 28, 2016

¹⁰ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 28, 2016

GERMANY – Keeping it Fun, Not Competitive



“Activity is not about competition,” says Andrea Dokter, Grant Manager, Klasse2000. “We want children to like movement and physical activities.”¹¹

Klasse2000, which began in 1991, operates in all 16 German states and serves 480,000 students. It is the largest program for primary-school students (grades 1-4, ages 6-10) in the nation, and MIF currently is its largest

donor. Physical activity and relaxation techniques are regarded as key elements in improving children’s health and well-being.

To support the program, Klasse2000 hires external health promoters with backgrounds in health or education and experience in working with children. With Klasse2000’s specialized training, teachers and the health promoters then engage with students in various activities, including¹²:

- Regular physical exercise and relaxation in class
- Motion breaks
- Breathing exercises
- Experiments (e.g., heartbeat before and after moving).

The program does not provide equipment for physical activity but does offer a CD with “Music for 5-Minute Motion Breaks” during classes. Klasse2000’s focus is more on physical activity in everyday life - for example, taking the stairs rather than the elevator, says Brigitte Horst, Program Manager, Klasse2000¹³.

Programmatic evaluations, including an extensive 2015 Bielefeld University study, have shown consistent benefits from the Klasse2000 approach¹⁴.

¹¹ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 22, 2016

¹² Klasse2000 report to MIF, June 30, 2016

¹³ Email to MIF consultant Oct. 20, 2016

¹⁴ Evaluation - executive summary, Dr. Petra Kolip, Bielefeld University, 2015 www.klasse2000.de

INDIA – Building Family, Community Support for Active Play



Shubh Aarambh (Auspicious Beginning) has established 29 play areas around schools to encourage student involvement in physical activities. Shubh Aarambh also provides participating schools with play equipment, including for cricket and soccer, to motivate student activity. While curricula differ from state to state, children in the program have scheduled periods for physical activity. Even in densely populated urban areas where schools lack space, organizers can identify and develop a safe nearby play area.¹⁵

Shubh Aarambh is a joint program of Save the Children India, Magic Bus, and MIF, and serves 48 villages in four Indian states: Himachal Pradesh in the north, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in central India, and Tamil Nadu in the south. The target population includes 40,097 children and adolescents.¹⁶ Active play is one of the four key pillars of the program, along with kitchen gardens, nutrition and health education.¹⁷ Analysis of children ages 7-14 showed a significant improvement in the intervention communities between baseline to midline regarding physical activity. Children in the intervention group reporting to have engaged in active play for about one hour daily increased from 54% to 68%.¹⁸

Community events focusing on aspects of the Shubh Aarambh program, including physical activity and sporting events, also give children the opportunity to exercise, and build awareness among parents and other stakeholders about the importance of physical activity. “Changing the mindset of the parents, the teachers, the community at large is quite important,” says Venkatesh. “A lot of work has gone around that outreach.”¹⁹

“A lot of times, in urban locations there are challenges of space,” notes Sumita Kirti, Project Manager for Shubh Aarambh. “Through the safe play spaces we have developed in the communities, now there is a place where kids can go to play. ... The play, the nutritional benefits, all of these are being discussed with children, ensuring that the messages are brought back to families. Investing in young children who can be ambassadors takes nutrition and physical activities forward.”²⁰

¹⁵ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 9, 2016

¹⁶ Shubh Aarambh Program Impact Pathway presentation to MIF, May 2016

¹⁷ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 9, 2016

¹⁸ Mid-line Assessment of Shubh Aarambh Project in Four States of India, 2016

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 9, 2016

MEXICO – From Kits to Camps, Surrounding Children with Active Play Ideas



A foundation of Alianza por el Bienestar de la Niñez (Partnership for Child Wellbeing) is regular workshops which teach children in physical activity and nutrition. This program is a partnership between Save the Children Mexico and Mondelēz International Foundation to support healthy lifestyles among schoolchildren.

Its purpose is to improve the nutrition and physical activity of children (ages 2-13) in 20 primary schools and 84 early childhood development (ECD) community centers in the States of México and Puebla State, and in Mexico City. The program currently serves 9,099 primary-school children and 4,126 pre-schoolers.²¹

Save the Children promoters conduct physical activity workshops for all the schools and all the classes throughout the school year. Promoters provide two sixty-minute physical activity sessions per month for each class, in each grade, in each school a total of 1737 individual physical activity sessions in the 2015-16 school year.²²

The program hired a technical lead for physical activity and partnered with a Mexican company, Sports World – a leading operator of sports clubs and gymnasiums – to help train teachers and program staff.²³

In June 2016, the program provided sports kits to each participating elementary school in Mexico City and Puebla. Sports kits consisted of jumping sacks, ropes, hoops, mats, cones, soccer balls, basketballs and soft balls. Similar kits were distributed to all community centers the following month.

To help reinforce lessons learned during the school year, Save the Children held 10-day, free summer camps for 113 school children in Puebla and Mexico City. Children were recruited from Heroes de la Naval, Maestro Candor Guajardo and Justo Sierra schools close to the camp locations. Students and parents signed up for camp on report card pick-up day.

²¹ Alianza por el Bienestar Six-Month Report: February-July 2016

²² Email to MIF consultant Dec. 2, 2016

²³ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 5, 2016

SOUTH AFRICA – Making Active Play a Habit, at School and Home



Health in Action South Africa is tailored to specific regional needs. Close engagement with schools and government education and health officials allow the program to be sensitive to local conditions. For example, while some schools report many students with obesity, others grapple with a significant number suffering from undernourishment.²⁴

The program, which began in 2015, is a partnership of INMED South Africa and MIF.

It serves a total of 116 schools in lower-income areas – 46 in Johannesburg and 70 in Port Elizabeth – with more than 100,000 students ages 6-12.²⁵ The key goals are to increase participation in physical activity, both through school-based physical education and leisure time recreation and play, with an emphasis on making activity fun so that it becomes part of students' daily lives.²⁶

Health in Action supports physical activity education through teacher training and in hiring out-of-work youth who have both the interest and aptitude for working with young children. The youth training is supported by faculty from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth as well as Wits University in Johannesburg.

“Most teachers are not trained in physical education - they may be math or biology teachers, but not trained in phys ed,” explains Unathi Sihlahla, Program Director for the Health in Action Program at INMED South Africa. “We started workshops ... and work on lesson plans for phys ed.”²⁷

As in other countries, the program also provides participating schools with necessary sports equipment such as soccer balls and jump ropes. “The equipment must be used! That’s the condition,” emphasizes Sihlahla. Activities are designed not just toward organized sports but enjoyable, active playtime because children are more likely to make physical activity a habit when it does not feel like exercise at all. Sandra Pretorius-Rivalland, Program Coordinator, says the program organizes activity days at the school with games such as tug of war and sack racing so “it’s really fun for the kids.”²⁸

²⁴ Skype interview with INMED Sept. 16, 2016

²⁵ Skype interview with MIF consultant Sept. 16, 2016

²⁶ Health In Action South Africa, Quarterly Progress Report, August 2016

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Skype interview with MIF consultant Sept. 16, 2016

UNITED KINGDOM – Parental Involvement a Must for Lasting Impact



A well-mapped-out development plan, teacher and staff training, and performance review are built into the Health for Life program and are keys to its success. It is also important, that physical activity is not seen only as competitive sports, but active play such as hula-hooping or walking or riding a bicycle to school rather than taking a car or bus.²⁹ Health for Life has operated in 107 primary schools in the south Birmingham, UK region, impacting more than 80,000 students.

The program is targeted at primary school children ages 4-11 and special schools which serve pupils ages 4-18. The program is a partnership between the UK Health Education Service, Life Education Centres West Midlands and MIF.³⁰

Health for Life seeks to make culture changes in healthy lifestyles, including physical activity, in schools, families and communities, says Dr. Sandra Passmore, Education Advisor. Long-term sustainable change is not possible, she notes, if children participate in the program in school but then go home, eat unhealthily, and do not engage in physical activity.³¹ Key elements of the physical activity part of the program include:

- Improved use of school grounds to promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Training pupils to be play leaders to increase the games children play.
- Buying new equipment (jump ropes, hula hoops) to enable different activities.
- Training pupils and staff on traditional playground games.
- Clearing overgrown areas of the school grounds so that they can be used for activities.

Recognizing the importance of parental involvement, the program also encourages family activities outside the school, such as building and flying kites, family bike rides, and maintaining gardens. Of the 23 schools Life Education worked with, 100% show an improvement in physical activity, range of activities and an increased understanding by pupils of the need to be active every day.³²

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Health for Life in primary schools, Birmingham - report to MIF February 2016

³¹ Telephone interview with MIF consultant Sept. 14, 2016

³² Health for Life in primary schools, Birmingham - report to MIF February 2016

CONCLUSION

MIF and its partners across the globe are investing in programs to help kids make physical activity a regular and lifelong habit. Results in all seven programs show improvement in physical activity among children in the partner schools, and program leaders confidence in the program’s sustainability. As a true partnership sensitive to local conditions, priorities and constraints, such as lack of resources, the program encourages and enables innovation. MIF’s emphasis on sharing information and best practices enables partners to learn from each other, for the benefit of their children of all the participating nations.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Mondelez International Foundation and its partners are empowering communities to lead healthier lives through programs that offer nutrition education, promote active play and provide access to nutritious fresh foods to help address nutrient needs for at-risk populations – all of which help support of the following [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

