

**Calinog, Iloilo, Philippines**

# **Malitbog National High School**

**A holistic health programme for underprivileged students**



**WORLD'S  
BEST SCHOOL**  
Supporting  
Healthy Lives

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# Introduction

Malitbog National High School is a secondary school in Calinog, Iloilo, in the Philippines. To promote physical, mental, and social health during the pandemic, the school implemented its Happy and Healthy School Programme (HHS) to its 1,000 students, 90% of whom fall below the poverty line and 60% of whom were malnourished when they started school. The school is also known for its other programmes and innovations such as Culture-based and Inclusive Education “sa Balay” (Home-based, Culture-based, and Inclusive Education) which redefines the roles of family members and the communities for students’ learning continuity.





# Profile:

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**Country:**  
Philippines



**Region:**  
Calinog, Iloilo



**School type:**  
Public school



**Location area:**  
Rural



**Student population:**  
1001 - 1500



**Prize Category:**  
Supporting Healthy Lives

**“We were able to depend on the strength of our culture. We have a holistic approach in everything the school and community challenges, and every step of the way there is consultation among all stakeholders – parents, learners, local government users, even the indigenous cultural communities.”– Jesus Catigan, Principal, Malitbog National High School**





# In-depth look

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

Malitbog National High School opened in 1967 and after 55 years became known as one of the best-performing schools in the country. The school's learners reside in remote areas in the heart of Panay Island, which presents challenges with the distance from home to school, inaccessible roads, and lack of public transportation. Often, students either walk or ride the "habal-habal" (motorcycle) to school.

The school caters to learners from three indigenously rich municipalities, whose children make up 30% of the student population. Many of the school's students speak Kinaray-a, Filipino (the country's national language), and English.

The impetus behind the HHS programme came about due to a lack of government funding, which has historically impacted a number of educational institutions across the country. "Some of our teachers are demotivated, worried about their pensions, most especially those who are retired," says Garry Arsenio, the school's Development Officer. These concerns had an impact on the school's ability to cater to its students, and this, in turn, pushed the school to become more proactive about how it would operate as an institution.






Due to the pandemic, students were forced to study at home and relied on their parents for their educational needs. Therefore, the implementation of the HHS programme became not only school-based but extended to every home within the wider school community. However, parents became confused about their roles in home-based learning and worried about how they would help in their children's schooling. These community tensions were further exacerbated as teachers refused to be vaccinated during the first quarter of 2021 and again when the vaccination was rolled out in early October 2021.

There was also a low rate of students who would engage in their studies because of the lack of teacher supervision. When the school shifted to home-based learning, students became even less motivated to learn, with 50% of the students handing in either no or incomplete work.







**“We have accomplished so much, and [what] we have achieved in these programmes is the manifestation of our work and the collaboration.”**

**- Kyd Flomen De Asis, Community Leader, Happy and Healthy School Programme**





# EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

“If motivated and well-guided,” says Jesus Catigan Insilada, the school’s Principal, “the school community is an ideal community, where everyone has a significant role to play for the achievement of educational and institutional goals. Our mission is to protect and promote the right of every Filipino to quality, equitable, culture-based education, where students learn in a child-friendly, gender-sensitive, safe, and motivating environment.”

The Happy and Healthy School Programme (HHS) is based on the idea that every problem has a solution. Thus, even during a global pandemic, the school was of the view that a community could address their problems as one body. The school initiated projects and activities like home gardening, home-based wellness, advocating a healthy diet, clean water and sanitation, and mental health advocacy. The HHS programme was – and still is – about instilling the value of a holistically healthy and happy lifestyle, that any problem or challenge can be solved, and education goals can be achieved.

Based on research on choice theory, the school aimed for the programme to meet several needs:

- The first was survival: the school needed to survive its problems and challenges and had to continuously improve to better serve its stakeholders.
- The second was the “need to belong and be loved by others”, which the school addressed by involving all stakeholders and defining their roles and contributions to the organisation's growth.



- The third focused on the “need to have power and importance”, which was primarily a focus on empowerment and was emphasized by highlighting the importance of leadership, innovation, collaboration, and unity in implementing the program and its sub-programs and innovations.
- The fourth need was “the need for freedom” and the school should be guided by the mantra that ‘Every Child is a Champion’ as well as the principles of the Department of Education’s Vision and Mission.
- The last need was “the need for fun”: through the HHS Programme, everyone within the school community could come to appreciate the importance of staying positive and enjoying every moment of togetherness, while working together for the common good.

Faculty members began building a strong rapport with students and their families through social media, creating WhatsApp groups to send friendly morning reminders about maintaining a healthier lifestyle. “Teachers reminded the children and their parents not to skip meals and not to discourage breakfast as it’s the most important meal of the day,” said Arlyn Calvo. “Students can’t learn on an empty stomach.”

As part of the HHS, the school established a ‘School Brigade Campaign’ that was tasked with aiding students and the wider community with the resources they needed during the pandemic. With the help of other stakeholders, the campaign grew stronger and helped the school generate more than 2 million pesos for bond paper, printing, disinfectant, and Wash-in-School during the pandemic. The school assigned ‘leaders’ to help in the day-to-day operations of the programme,





as well as to help students with their studies and HHS-associated tasks. “We are always here to support,” says Kyd Flomen De Asis, one of the chief leaders, going on to explain how the leaders acted to maintain the “respect, peace, and happiness” of the programme.

Malitbog National High School was the first to return to face-to-face learning during the pandemic and ensured its students were able to study in a safe environment. “As members of the school’s COVID response team, we were able to organise our contingency plan,” says Hyacinth Galvo, a member of the school’s COVID team. Through the school’s efforts, there were no cases of COVID while face-to-face learning took place. The school also provided technical assistance to other schools that were struggling to accommodate a return to face-to-face classes.







**“We have proven that, in  
unity, we can achieve greater  
things.”**

**– Jesus Catigan, Principal, Malitbog  
National High School**





# OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

The Healthy and Happy School Programme restored a harmonious relationship among stakeholders, which improved the school's overall atmosphere. Since the programme's implementation, the school's dropout rate steadily decreased. In the 2018-19 academic year, the rate was 2.1%. A year later, it rose to 2.15%, but in the 2020-21 academic year, despite the pandemic, the rate fell to 0.97% and finally down to 0.00% further into the 2021 school year.

The HHS Programme also helped parents understand the new learning-from-home setup and helped them adjust to – and be more involved in – the new norm. In an initial survey on parents' readiness, 80% of them felt that they could not perform their responsibilities as learning facilitators. After the faculty gave them a detailed explanation of their expectations and how to help

the children learn from home, they quickly adapted to their new roles and immediately became more positive and accountable. In a second survey, 85% of them said that they were committed to contributing to their children's studies.

Over time, more stakeholders became more aware and involved in the programme, and multi-sectoral support started to pour in. Malitbog National High School was declared a Regional Champion in the “Brigada Eskwela” (School Brigade) contest for its innovative resource generation and for mobilising its stakeholders.

Another result of the programme was reaching a 100% vaccination rate among faculty. The student's academic involvement, in the meantime, increased from 88% to 93%.



The HHS programme was unique because it focused not only on the school itself but on the students' homes and communities as well. The activities and initiatives that directly involved the families and communities were the Culture-based and Inclusive education "sa Balay", the Pagdungaw Programme, Learning Space Contest, Home Gardening, the Community-based Reading Brigade, Mobile Library, and Peer-tutoring, among others.





# Key Steps



## **IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM(S)**

Because learners and parents had a hard time adjusting to the new normal the school trained and guided parents on the best way to take part in their children's learning.



## **UNDERSTANDING EVERYONE'S INTERESTS AND ASPIRATIONS**

The school came to acknowledge and embrace the needs of its learners and the wider community. For instance, students wanted to learn in a friendly environment and with the guidance of their teachers, despite being at a distance. This was especially important in the most relevant subjects to their lives as indigenous people and as members of a community with very rich culture and traditions.





## LISTING POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The Healthy and Happy School Programme was introduced based on the following principles:

- Everyone's health and safety is a shared responsibility. The school can take the lead in informing the campaign, but good health and good health education must be emphasized in the curriculum.
- Communities have so much knowledge and wisdom to share. In its fight against COVID-19, the school came to acknowledge and value the wisdom imparted from indigenous communities regarding health, community, and meditation.
- The understanding that Happiness is a pre-conditioned mindset. If the work atmosphere is positive and supportive, people will be proactive and accountable for their own happiness.



## TESTING THE SOLUTIONS

A week after the programmes were finalised and approved, the school performed a week-long simulation where they observed, monitored, and gathered feedback.







## **DECIDING ON THE BEST SOLUTIONS**

After the programme simulation, the members of the Core/Technical Working Group were called to present the findings and discuss the final activities and secondary initiatives. From there, they presented and approved the final list.



## **IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTIONS**

During the programme launch, the school emphasized multi-sectoral support to successfully implement the Healthy and Happy School Programme. They also presented the programme's rationale and objectives as clearly as possible. The Core/Technical Working Group was formally introduced as were the committee member's roles and functions.



## **MONITORING THE PROCEDURE**

Once underway, the school and committee monitored and evaluated the programme. The results were tabulated, interpreted, and reported for recommended improvements.





## WHAT WENT RIGHT, WHAT WENT WRONG

The results of the analysis provided insights into what went right and what went wrong. Good points are considered and areas to be disregarded were also noted.





# Advice and Guidance

Multi-sectoral support is pivotal for every school. For this initiative to be effective, the school must focus on devising a programme that delivers for all its stakeholders, in particular for the students. Faculty and staff must be positive and strive to look for solutions to challenges that impact the students and those in the wider community. Ultimately, it was every stakeholder's commitment to the programme that held it together, including parents, students, and local government officials.

## More information

 **DepEd Tayo Malitbog National High Sc**

**Learn more about their work by  
watching their event at 2022's T4 World  
Education Week: [watch here](#)**

