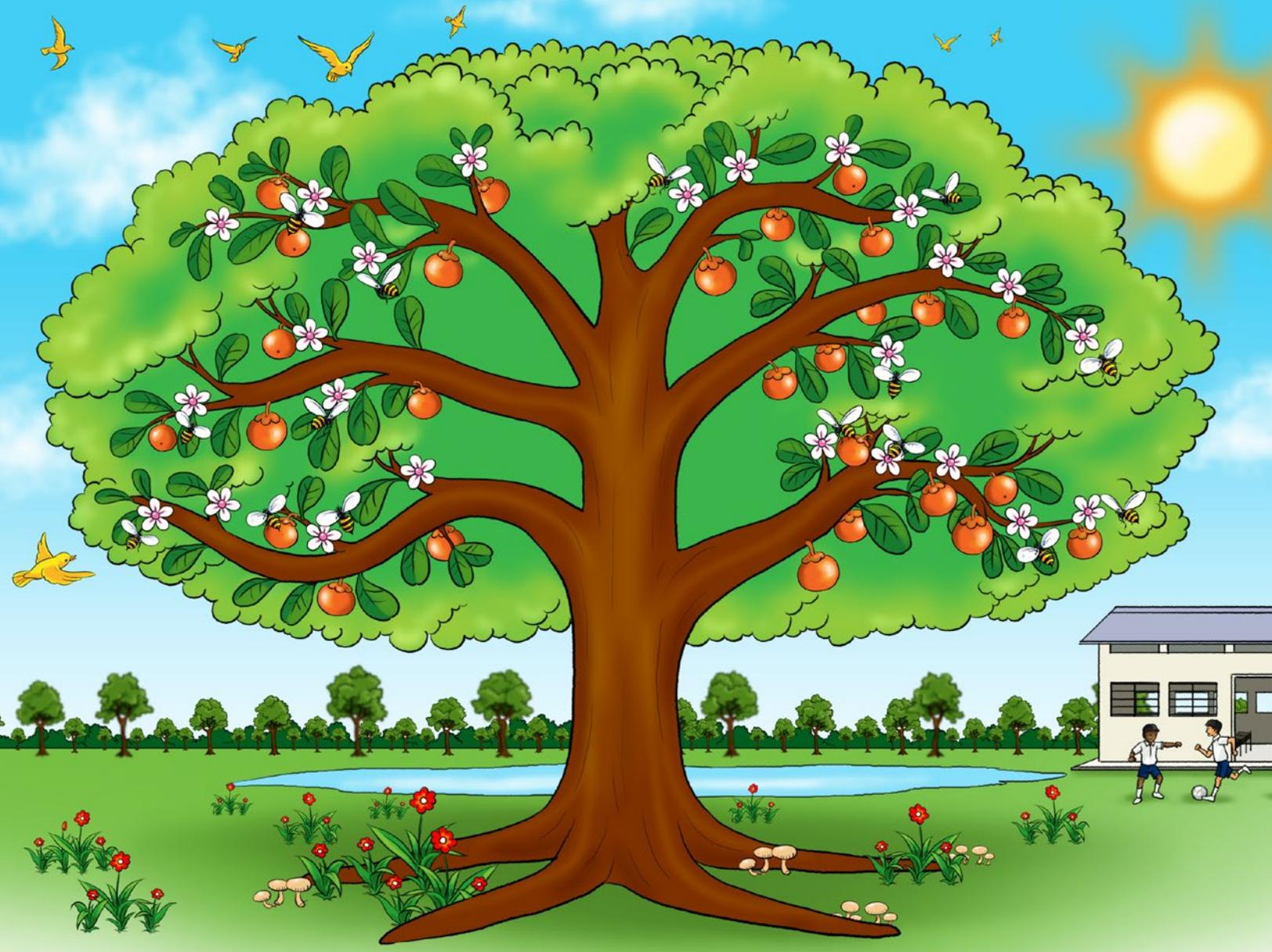


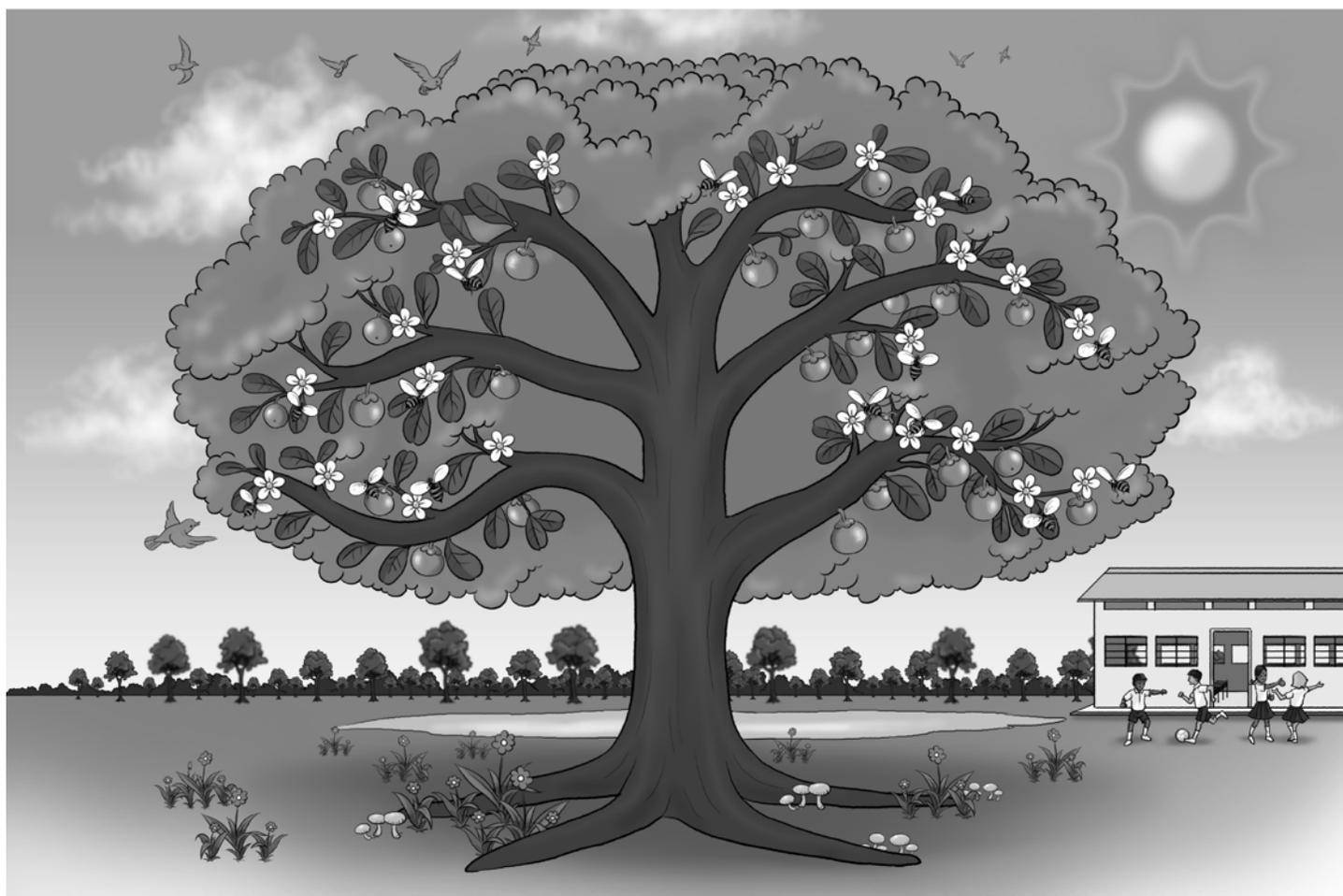
HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOLS

Experiences from the Western Pacific Region



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Health Promoting Schools

At a health promoting school (HPS), all members of the school community work together to provide students with positive experiences and structures that promote and protect their health (1). Good health improves school attendance and cognition and positively influences the economic and social potential of children. Moreover, school health programmes have been shown to have a huge influence on the well-being of teachers, parents, school staff and the surrounding community (2, 3, 4, 5).

There are an estimated 1.8 billion children aged 5 to 19 years in the world today (6). Around 66% and 89% are estimated to be enrolled in secondary (7) and primary schools (8), respectively, thus giving schools considerable reach and potential to deliver targeted health messages and interventions to children, improving their health, well-being and academic performance. Such interventions can address the double burden of malnutrition. In many countries, undernutrition, stunting and wasting persist alongside a rise in overweight and obesity in children, which predisposes them in adulthood to life-threatening noncommunicable diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer (9). Schools can also build children's resilience and develop their life skills to reduce the risk of mental health disorders, violence and injuries, engagement in substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour, all of which can impact children's full development (10).

To address these public health issues, the HPS approach encourages both the health and education sectors to engage in intersectoral dialogue for the attainment of mutual goals: disease prevention, and improved health and educational outcomes.

A health promoting school is characterized by **six key factors** as indicated below (11).

A health promoting school:

1. establishes and documents **school policies** that promote health and well-being;
2. provides a safe, secure, clean, sustainable, conducive and **healthy physical environment** for learning;
3. builds a secure school **social environment** that fosters positive relationships among and between students, staff, parents and the wider community;
4. strengthens **community links** through connections and partnerships among families, the community, schools, organizations and other stakeholders;
5. includes **action competencies for healthy living** in the formal and informal curricula for development of students' knowledge and life skills; and
6. facilitates access to **health-care and health promotion services**.

To introduce the HPS approach to Member States in the Region, the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific published the *Regional guidelines: Development of health-promoting schools – A framework for action* in 1996, and updated these in 2009 (12). Based on the experiences shared by national agencies and schools involved in HPS initiatives across the Western Pacific Region, this document presents practical advice on the implementation of the key factors, as well as strategies to overcome common challenges encountered.

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