

**Project: Promoting Healthy Eating Habits at Wat Mai Thaicharoen Kindergarten, Nobpitam Subdistrict, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province**

**Situation:** School-age children are in a critical phase for growth and development, making proper nutrition essential. However, 80% of students at Wat Mai Thaicharoen Kindergarten were found to have unhealthy eating habits that did not meet nutritional guidelines. Contributing factors included students' dislike of vegetables, skipping breakfast, parents lacking time to prepare meals, and the prevalence of convenience food stalls near the school selling primarily fried and pre-packaged meals. These factors led to malnutrition, which poses risks to physical development, cognitive abilities, and long-term health issues such as chronic diseases. Recognizing this, the school initiated a project aimed at promoting healthy eating habits aligned with the nutritional guidelines appropriate for the students' age group. The main objectives were to encourage students to eat nutritious meals and ensure they consume breakfast regularly.

**Process and Activities:** A task force of 30 individuals from various school, family, and community stakeholders was formed. This group conducted surveys on the students' eating habits and nutritional status. They collaborated to introduce the concept of nutrition according to dietary guidelines and ensured that school meals were appropriate for students. Additionally, the project encouraged parents to prepare breakfast for students who did not eat before school. The school also worked with local vendors, both inside and outside the campus, to offer healthier food options in line with nutritional standards. School cooks were trained to prepare balanced lunches for the students.

**Collaborating Partners:** Key partners included professional nurses who provided nutrition education to students, parents, and teachers. Teachers helped monitor and assess students' dietary intake and ensured that the meals prepared by the school cooks met nutritional standards. Cooks prepared lunches that followed the dietary guidelines, while parents were encouraged to prepare healthy breakfasts at home. Vendors inside and outside the school were also asked to adjust their menus to offer healthier food options.

**Outcomes:** A task force of 30 members was established, including school administrators, lead teachers, student leaders, school cooks, representatives from school vendors, parent leaders,

health officials, and other community supporters (such as local farmers and school board members). The task force clearly defined roles and responsibilities. A survey of students' eating habits revealed that 31% were not meeting the dietary guidelines due to a preference for carbohydrate-rich foods and selective eating habits, such as choosing only eggs and pork while avoiding fish (due to a fear of bones) and favoring fried foods over steamed options. In response, the task force designed meal plans based on the School Lunch Program guidelines from the Department of Health, adding variety and visual appeal to the menu to make the meals more attractive to students. Daily activities were implemented to encourage students to follow the dietary guidelines, and parents were regularly informed through group chats about ways to support healthy eating at both school and home.