WORKPLACE NUTRITION FOR PRODUCTIVITY & IMPROVED NUTRITION

What is Workplace Nutrition?

Workplace Nutrition (WN) is a conscious effort by employers to improve food and nutrition of employees in order to increase productivity, profitability and business image. Workplace nutrition programs can be either comprehensive program package or a combination of need based change steps in a specific workplace context which include improving access to nutritious and safe food for employees at work, engaging and educating employees on diets & lifestyle changes, provision of nutrition focused health checks services and providing breastfeeding facilities to employed mothers at work.

How malnutrition impacts business and the economy?

According to the a study of Ministry of Planning & Development Reform, undernutrition costs Pakistan US$7.6Billion annually in the form of productivity losses and healthcare cost. Poor mental and physical health caused by undernutrition suppresses economic performance and leads to reduction of GDP by US$3.7 billion annually. The economic output of various sectors particularly labour-intensive sectors is reducing and resulting losses are US$657 million annually. Similarly, poor breastfeeding and zinc deficiency costs US$1 Billion to the country. As major employer, the economic consequence of malnutrition is huge for the private sector, and is slashing corporate profits.

Investing in workplace nutrition is a business case

Malnutrition manifests in the form of poor productivity. Low productivity has a number of negative impacts on a workplace, including economic effects on profitability and systemic implications for workers’ health and morale. According to ILO’s Food at Work report, inadequate nourishment can cut productivity by 20%. The economic output and productivity losses due to malnutrition offer clear incentives to invest in better nutrition of employees. As employees spend the most productive time of their day at work and eat at least one meal and snack, employers have a big opportunity to increase their productivity by improving their access to nutritious and safe food, nutrition services and nutrition and lifestyle education.

Realizing this potential, employers are investing in improving nutrition and wellness of employees to achieve better productivity. Employers that support and invested in employee nutrition and wellbeing have realized higher return on investment. Unilever lamplighter program shows a return on investment of US$1:US$2.24. MexMode Garment’s better food canteen with subsidy voucher has reduced employee sickness and accidents and increased morale and outputs. Beside this, there are numerous examples both in emerging and developed economies where investment in employee food and nutrition have shown significant positive results. A study on freshly prepared nutritionally enhance lunch were provided to workers along with other steps in the readymade garment factories in Bangladesh has shown significant reduction in anemia.
Our Approach

Workplace Nutrition (WN) is a new concept for the local industry. Given its newness to the local industry, SBN takes a demonstrative approach with its existing members companies to demonstrate it as local business case. Building on the demonstration pilots, SBN will develop a localized guide/toolkit to advocate and facilitate the local businesses to implement workplace nutrition program. The initial focus is on existing SBN member companies, however, over the time, SBN will surface the labor intensive industries particular garments and agriculture sector to introduce workplace nutrition programs. To sustain and scale the workplace nutrition programs, engagements with key industry players and stakeholders and organizing awareness/influencing events are critical. Alongside that, SBN will develop industry oriented employee services providers to innovate and create value in workplace nutrition for the industry.

Pathways to Impact

1. Improve Access to healthy food at work
   - Workers Access healthier food during work hours
   - Improved Consumption of Safe and Nutritious foods/healthy diets at work
   - Improved workers diets, physical activity levels, and other health related activities

2. Educate employees on nutrition and diets & Lifestyle changes
   - Workers knowledge and skills related to healthy and nutritious improved
   - More satisfied workforce
   - Lower health care cost
   - Positive return on investment
   - Healthier workforce
   - Low rate of absenteeism/presenceism
   - More productive workforce
   - Healthier, less sick children of workers

3. Provide Nutrition focused health checks
   - Workers are aware of their own health status and know what they can do to address it

4. Provide breastfeeding facilities
   - Working mothers have sufficient time, knowledge and resources to breastfeed optimally
   - Extended duration of breastfeeding, rates of exclusive breastfeeding improve

*Adopted from Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) Workforce Nutrition Convening paper

Status

To demonstrate workplace nutrition, two SBN member companies have voluntarily taken steps with technical support from SBN/GAIN. The demonstration includes design of company-specific workplace nutrition programs for the selected companies to implement the designs at their settings. The pilot programs have the potential to positively impact the nutrition of around 2000 workers employed in the production facilities and main offices of Engro Foods and Hub-Salt Refinery.

After initial assessment of company contexts, workplace nutrition designs are completed, and implementation has been initiated. We will closely work with the companies to track progress and response of employees to the changes to learn and adapt and improve our future activities. A comprehensive results measurement plan has been developed to measure changes that covers qualitative aspects of the changes and their results. A localised comprehensive toolkit for the local industry is under consideration to guide them in implementing effective workplace nutrition program independently.