

The Seeds of Prosperity Programme: making business work for nutrition, and nutrition work for business



Through the Seeds of Prosperity programme, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), and Unilever are working through commodity supply chains to improve workers' diets and hygiene practices. A successful pilot has reached 2,600 farmers in Tamil Nadu, India and the programme will now be replicated in tea farming communities in Assam as well as Kenya and Malawi, benefiting a further 300,000 people. The programme partners now want to bring other business on board to extend the programme, reaching 2.5m people and strengthening their most important crop: family.

The challenge

Some 500 million people are small-scale farmers globally, meaning they rely on small family plots of land for their food production. Although small-scale farmers manage 80% of farmland in Asia and Africa¹, they often sell their most nutritious foods, and eat starchy foods such as rice, bread and wheat - inexpensive and filling, but lacking in key nutrients such as iron and zinc, which are essential for good health.

1 FAO (2012) Smallholders and family farmers



At least five out of 10 food groups a day



A diverse diet – one incorporating many food groups – can be the difference between poor and good health: a monotonous diet is more likely to bring deficiencies in micronutrients such as iron, vitamin A and zinc. This increases mortality and impedes brain and body development. An estimated two billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies globally². But the impacts of a homogenous diet go beyond this, affecting people’s socio-economic status³, and their ability to earn money. Adults who were malnourished as children earn at least 20% less on average than those who weren’t⁴, and national economies lose on average 10% of GDP annually due to malnutrition⁵, as a result of early deaths and decreased productivity.

Poor hygiene is also a major challenge: diarrhoea is the second biggest killer of children under five years old. Simply washing hands with soap could reduce the number of diarrhoea cases by up to 47%⁶, but many people are not aware of the link between hygiene and health.

GAIN, Unilever, and the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) saw an opportunity to improve the nutrition and health of farmers, workers and their families in supply chains, whilst working to increase supplier and worker satisfaction, productivity and brand loyalty. A successful pilot programme in tea estates and factories in Tamil Nadu, India increased the number of food groups that supply chain workers are eating, with the aim of improving both their intake of essential micronutrients and their hygiene practices.



2 Global Nutrition Report, 2016.
 3 Hoddinott and Yohannes, 2002; Hatloy et al., 2000.
 4 S Grantham-McGregor et al (2007) Development potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries. The Lancet. 369: 60-70.
 5 Source: Global Nutrition Report 2016.
 6 [www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(03\)00606-6/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(03)00606-6/abstract)

How it works

The Seeds of Prosperity programme is grounded in the proven ‘five levers of change’ approach to behaviour change⁷. The headline message of the programme is that ‘our families are our most important crop’. First, supply chain workers are selected to be ‘master trainers’ and trained on why a diverse diet matters, what it looks like, and how other estate workers or farmers can improve their diets. These master trainers then go on to teach groups in their community. The nine-week programme is comprised of six weeks of nutrition training and 21 days of handwashing training. Both parts have five key components.

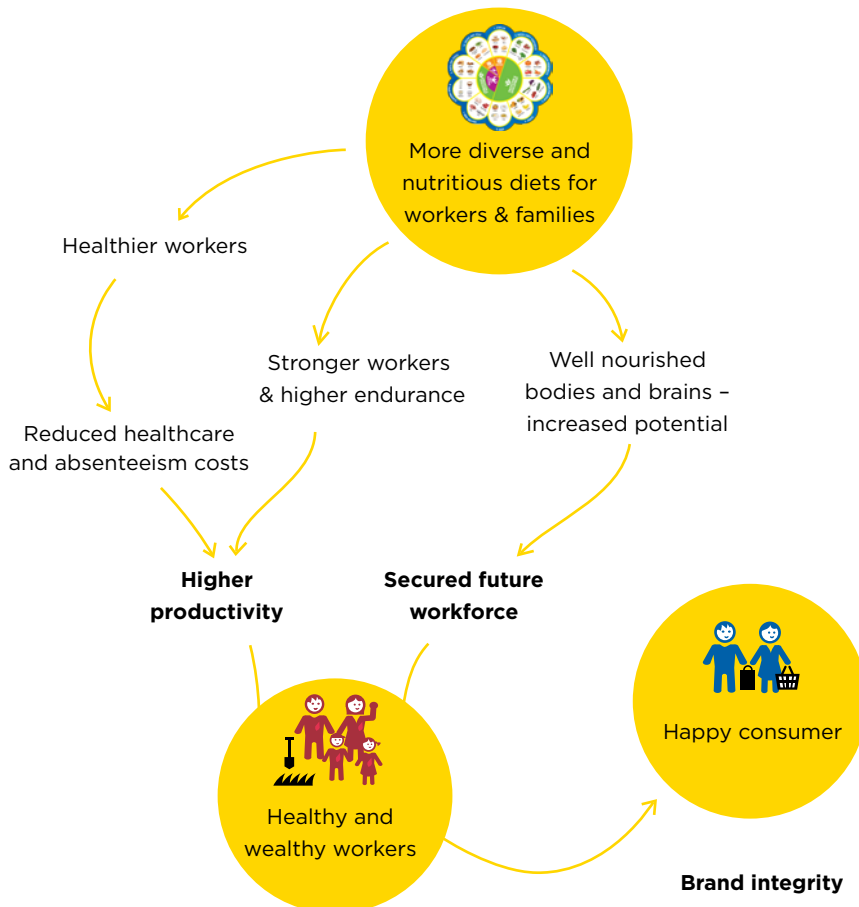
Impact of the pilot programme

The pilot programme, co-created with Solidaridad, reached 2,600 people across four tea factories and estates in Tamil Nadu, India. Women who participated in the programme reported a 41% increase in the variety of foods consumed, almost double the 24% increase in women who were not part of the programme. There was also a 41% increase in the number of households which grew vegetables in their gardens. The hygiene component saw 78% of tea growers washing their hands before lunch daily, compared to 51% of growers who did not participate in the programme.

“Since I take care of better nutrition and hygiene in my family, I am able to reduce the medical fees for my children.”

Poornima, 32 years, tea farmer, Tamil Nadu

⁷ www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/the-sustainable-living-plan/our-strategy/embedding-sustainability/encouraging-behaviour-change.html



In addition to this, participants reported high levels of engagement with the programme, with 98% saying it was likely to positively affect their decision to stay with the tea estate or factory. Participants' personal perspectives suggested that the programme reduced absenteeism and healthcare costs, and increased loyalty to their tea factories/suppliers.

Responsible business - sustainable business

The Seeds of Prosperity programme offers a unique opportunity to improve the lives and futures of farmers and workers by working through business' existing systems and supply chains. As well as building prosperous and healthy communities and families, the programme could benefit brand reputation and improve productivity.

Based on the success of this pilot, GAIN is expanding the 'Seeds of Prosperity' programme to tea value chains in other locations in Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kenya and Malawi, benefiting a further 300,000 people together with the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) and Unilever.

The potential of the 'Seeds of Prosperity' programme to expand further is significant. GAIN plans to work with Unilever and IDH to bring in new business partners to move beyond certification, and demonstrate the impact that business can have on building healthy communities, reaching 2.5m people to strengthen their most important crop - their families.

Contact details

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Programme partners

www.gainhealth.org / [@GAINalliance](#)

www.unilever.com / [@unilever](#)

www.idhsustainabletrade.com / [@idh_buzz](#)



“The programme helps to strengthen the bond with our supply chain partners by making a service available at their doorstep.”

Daleram Gulia, Procurement Manager, Sustainable Sourcing & Compliance - Unilever

“For Unilever, improving the health of the farmers in our value chain is a moral responsibility, but it also secures essential supplies, expands the market for our products, and increases the resilience of our business model.”

Katja Freiwald, Director Global Partnerships and Advocacy - Unilever