

Working Together for The Future of Ethiopia:

A Call to Action on Nutrition For the Private Sector

July 2014

Today in Ethiopia, more than 40% of children are malnourished, hindering the potential of the country's future workforce.¹

- Despite continued investment by the Government of Ethiopia and donors, **malnutrition rates in Ethiopia remain among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa.**^{1,2}
- The causes of malnutrition in Ethiopia are manifold: **Repeated infections, poor health, and inadequate intake of nutritious foods including breast milk are immediate causes of malnutrition, but underlying causes include food insecurity, high fertility rates, gender inequality, poverty, and lack of safe water, hygiene, and sanitation.**³
- **Among children under 5 years of age, 44% are malnourished.** Malnutrition takes many forms, including stunting (short for age), wasting (low

weight for height), underweight (low weight for age), iron deficiency anemia, vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency, and low birth weight (< 2.5 kg).^{1,2}

- **A healthy and productive workforce in Ethiopia is needed to improve and sustain economic productivity.** Iron deficiency anemia and stunting result in reduced labor productivity, which derails development progress.^{3,4}
- **Malnutrition will cost Ethiopia at least US\$25 billion in economic productivity losses by 2025.**³
- **Malnutrition undermines human capital.** Malnutrition in childhood impairs both physical growth and cognitive development, decreasing your future workforce's ability to conduct physical labor and decreasing a future employee's IQ points.^{3,4,5}

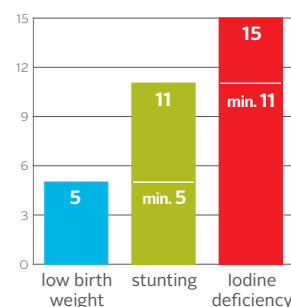
Why does this matter to the private sector?

- **Malnutrition is the underlying cause of as many as 45% of child deaths** in Ethiopia.^{3,4,6}
- **Malnourished children are more likely to have repeated illnesses and infections** (such as diarrhea and respiratory infections), causing parents to be absent from work to take care of sick children.¹
- **Malnourished children have an increased risk of chronic diseases in adulthood** (such as diabetes and heart disease), affecting the productivity of your future workforce.⁶
- **Research shows that children who are breastfed for 6 months, with no other foods or liquids, are healthier** than their malnourished peers.⁶

But malnutrition is preventable. We can improve the future of Ethiopia *if we act now.*

- **Healthier children results in fewer lost days of work for parents**, who would otherwise need to tend to sick children, and in a happier and healthier workforce, both now and in the future.
- **For a country like Ethiopia, nutrition is a smart investment:** For every US\$1 spent on nutrition, there is a US\$30 return in health and economic benefits.⁷

IQ Points Lost to Malnutrition⁵



How can you, as a member of the private sector, help?

As a business owner, you play a critical role in improving nutrition in Ethiopia. For example, by providing your employees with a supportive environment for breastfeeding, you are creating a healthier and happier workforce, both now and in the future.

Support the Government of Ethiopia's National Nutrition Program, which focuses on the first 1,000 days (from conception to a child's second birthday) and the country's most vulnerable demographic groups, including pregnant and lactating women and children under 5 years of age, by:

- Allowing working mothers to take a 6-month maternity leave
- Providing access to quality health care for working mothers and their children
- Allowing working mothers to work flexible hours and providing lactation areas for breastfeeding and pumping breast milk at work

What else can the food industry do?

Food producers, processors, manufacturers, and distributors in Ethiopia are all essential for Ethiopians to get a nutrient-dense and protein-rich diet. In addition to providing working mothers with a supportive environment for breastfeeding, it is crucial that companies working in the food industry:

- Diversify food production and make animal protein (e.g., dairy, eggs, meat, poultry, and fish) and micronutrient-rich foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables) more available throughout the country
- Fortify foods, such as flour with iron, oil with vitamin A, and salt with iodine
- Strengthen food safety and food handling practices
- Improve food storage and processing and reduce waste
- Invest in locally produced specialized food products to treat acute malnutrition
- Invest in locally produced low-cost fortified complementary foods for children aged 6–24 months
- Ensure that staple foods such as rice, wheat, and flour are affordable and that prices remain stable, so that households can afford to buy nutrient-dense and protein-rich foods
- Increase wages for male and female agricultural workers and ensure that men and women receive equal pay for equal work to increase families' ability to buy nutritious foods



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