

SDG 2: People

In part two of her series on the sustainable development goals, **Penny Walker** looks at the role of business in helping to cut hunger and promote healthy lives



Zero hunger

The second sustainable development goal (SDG) is to 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture'. Targets include: ensuring safe, nutritious and sufficient food for all; ending malnutrition, particularly among vulnerable people, such as under-fives, adolescent girls, pregnant and new mothers and older people; and increasing food production, while maintaining ecosystems and strengthening resilience to climate change.

According to José Graziano da Silva, director-general of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, nearly 80% of the extreme poor and undernourished people live in rural areas and climate change is making their lives harder. 'Poor family farmers are driven off their land by prolonged drought, coastal fishing communities are losing their homes because of rising sea levels, and pastoralists are forced to migrate in search of land on which their cattle can graze,' he says.

Working the land and seas harder will not solve the problem since unsustainable practices undermine future harvests. Business and smallholders need to get smarter, so this year's hungry are fed without denying those next year.

Making a start

If food is your business questions to ask include:

- Do your suppliers earn a decent living?
- Do practices conserve soil, water and genetic diversity?
- Do they build resilience and reduce reliance on intensive inputs?

Resources to help answer these include Unilever's sustainable agriculture code (bit.ly/22KLQ8E) and the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative's practitioner guide to sustainable sourcing (bit.ly/1UsSdbX).

If you buy, procure or commission food-related services ask whether you help people to make healthy, seasonal choices that support sustainable agriculture. Ask yourself too, what you can do to support the nutritional needs of the very young, very old, teenage girls and new mothers? Also, look to use ingredients and products backed by credible sustainability labels, such as Fairtrade International, Bonsucro or the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. All are members of the ISEAL Alliance, the association for sustainability standards, and meet its criteria for credibility and impact.

Unilever has a history of devoting considerable resources into research and development to make agricultural practices more sustainable. Its sustainable agriculture code, which sets out targets for suppliers and farms to work towards, was revised last year to include new expectations on land rights, worker health and climate resilience. Sustainable agriculture for Unilever includes switching to drip irrigation for growing gherkins to reduce water use by up to 70% while nearly doubling yields. Now, 24,000 smallholder farmers in India who supply Amora and Maille brands are using the technique and have increased their incomes as a result.

Development NGO Practical Action has also been focusing on micro-practices that can make the difference between livelihoods and subsistence, between farming that progressively weakens the underlying ecosystem and sustainable farming. Practical Action has been helping family coffee farmers in the Peruvian Amazon adapt to the impacts of climate change, including extremes of drought and rainfall, as well as an increase in diseases such as plant rust. The adaptive practices include a layered agroforestry approach in which crops as diverse as cassava and banana are grown alongside coffee, with canopy layers of seed- and shade-producing inga tree, and long-term timber-yielding cedar. Productivity and incomes are up, and the farmers have been able to organise themselves more effectively and gain better access to coffee export markets.

Smarter use of food resources also equates to fairer shares of healthier food. Reducing meat consumption in the developed world and switching to plant proteins has benefits for people's health and the environment, which is why the UN has declared 2016 the international year of pulses. Independent food business Hodmedod's has been reviving the growing of UK pulses such as organic black badger carlin peas, gog magog beans and fava beans. The Suffolk-based company is also pioneering varieties new to the UK and helping its customers love old-style dishes like parched peas.

Businesses outside the food sector can also contribute through their onsite catering facilities: staff restaurants at Jaguar Land Rover, the Scottish parliament, Defra and Decc hold the Soil Association's Food for Life catering mark.

2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Good health and wellbeing

The goal is to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages. The targets focus on mother and baby mortality; epidemics, including AIDS, TB and malaria; non-communicable diseases and mental health; substance abuse, including drugs, alcohol and tobacco; road accidents; sexual and reproductive health care; universal health coverage, including for those who cannot pay; hazardous chemicals and pollution; and access to vaccines and medicines.

There are well-recognised, long-established ways of managing and reducing direct risks to a workforce through attention to health and safety. Some companies are finding ways of going beyond this into wider wellbeing. Professional services company EY's approach to employee wellbeing has, at its core, the capacity to use feedback from health providers to ensure it is targeting the most pressing problems.

The Health EY programme encompasses training in mental health first aid as well as a range of more general health topics, such as posture and safe exercise. It has evolved by working with teams in HR, learning and development, procurement and reward functions, and is part of standard induction and management training. EY's mental health network has grown to 300 people. Amy McKeown, senior manager at EY UK who is responsible for driving the work, says: 'If you're planning on looking at wellbeing, make sure you understand what's already in place and think through what you want to do and why. Make sure there are support structures in place and pay attention to how it all links together.'

Charity Business in the Community (BitC) recognises that mental health is one of the biggest threats to the wellbeing of businesses and society. Its campaign, Time for Change, calls on every UK organisation to demonstrate their commitment to mental wellbeing by signing a pledge to tackle the issue in their workplace. So far, 393 organisations have done so. Founder members of the campaign include: American Express, BT, Bupa, Friends for Life, Mars, National Grid, P&G, Royal Bank of Scotland and Santander.

Companies including Crossrail and Thames Water have approaches that share learning and improvement up and down their supply chains too. Every supplier to Thames Water has access to the same confidential one-to-one annual occupational health check as employees of the utility company. This gives them the knowledge to make lifestyle changes that can improve their health. The Health Maturity Model, which Thames Water developed with its suppliers, can be used by any organisation to self-assess. Crossrail's learning legacy website (bit.ly/1SZZ1Nv) shares what has been learned on the project about reducing risks and promoting good health across a multilingual, multicultural workforce.

Different countries have different health priorities. In Nigeria, businesses have been involved in a long-term push to treat and prevent malaria. Nigerian Breweries, part of the Heineken group, has workplace programmes on malaria and other communicable diseases, including rapid diagnosis and supplying anti-mosquito bednets to employees and their families to reduce the chance of infections. The business works closely with the Heineken Africa Foundation to support wider communities near breweries in similar ways.

Making a start

Health and safety is among the more mature topics of interest in the SDGs, so begin by looking at what your organisation already has in place. Both Thames Water and Crossrail offer models for organisational self-assessment. New areas of interest include mental health – visit mhfaengland.org for mental health first aid courses. Business in the Community has developed its Workwell model (bit.ly/1qZDBVI). Its four segments cover employer actions to help staff make informed, healthy choices as well as the need for people to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing through an approach pioneered by the New Economics Foundation.

Look beyond the boundaries of your business and site to suppliers, subcontractors and employees' families. Consider the impacts of your products and of your lobbying activities. In countries with limited access to healthcare for the poor, consider how to contribute to health equality.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING





Quality education

This goal aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Targets focus on ensuring that girls and boys, women and men have access to education and training in safe, non-violent and inclusive environments. This includes the pre-school stage; free, quality primary and secondary education; and affordable, post-secondary education and training.

Gender disparities and equal access to opportunities for people with disabilities or from marginalised groups are also being tackled, with targets for scholarships and teacher training for developing countries and small island states. Basic literacy and numeracy, as well as knowledge and skills specific to promoting sustainable development, are given particular attention.

The UN says that a child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to live beyond the age of five. In sub-Saharan Africa and south and west Asia, nearly 25 million children leave school before completing primary education. However, great strides have been made globally in early years education, with 90% of children now attending primary school. But the poorest and most vulnerable still miss out, typically stopping education early to earn because of disability, gender inequalities, conflict or displacement.

Tata Power, part of the India-based multinational, supports literacy in the communities it operates. The programme is run with local NGOs using a bespoke course and materials developed by Tata Consultancy

services. The literacy and numeracy classes are intended to help women run small businesses and households more effectively and make them less vulnerable to fraud. The initiative had grown to 290 centres by the end of 2015, with nearly 18,000 women participating.

Banking group HSBC is also funding support through specialist NGOs. One scheme, the Opportunity Partnership programme, focuses on unemployed young people in the UK and aims to support 25,000 people over three years. As well as a funding package of £30m, HSBC staff are involved too. Volunteers provide advice on CVs, interview techniques and managing money. There is also a four-week vocational training programme to build skills relevant to work in financial services, with the opportunity to be interviewed for a permanent post.

Simon Martin, head of global corporate sustainability at HSBC, says: 'The education programme focuses on helping young people achieve their potential – supporting disadvantaged children and providing financial education and scholarships. It is delivered in partnership with charities that are experts in their field and have a proven record of working in the areas they serve.'

In a similar vein, as part of its global Skills to Succeed collaboration, consultancy Accenture has developed a free online training course for young job seekers. The Skills to Succeed Academy comes with a smartphone app and interactive and downloadable exercises.

Skills to Succeed is integrated into Accenture's businesses around the world, with its consultants using their professional skills (for example, in online learning) to support many of the individual initiatives. Some are also benefitting from financial contributions and volunteering activities. Working collaboratively, Accenture has provided 1.2 million people with skills to build a business or find a job since the programme started in 2010. The new goal is to increase that number to three million by 2020.

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Making a start

How could your business support basic numeracy, literacy and employability skills?

Traditional fundraising and charitable donations help: charity Mary's Meals supports basic education by ensuring food is provided at school, tackling two goals at the same time (marysmeals.org.uk), while non-profit organisation Valentino Achak Deng Foundation (vadfoundation.org) is running successful schools in South Sudan.

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