



The AKDN Workplace Wellness Programme

The welfare of employees has a direct impact on the success of any company. When employees are healthy, they are more likely to perform better, and feel happier and more resilient. There is less risk of illness, injury or depression, and companies are likely to have lower rates of absenteeism and greater productivity. For this reason, workplace wellness programmes are becoming increasingly widespread in both the private and non-private sectors. Often the benefits of such programmes can be substantial and wide-reaching, as employees with improved well-being, social support and job satisfaction contribute to a more informed and health-conscious society.

With about 80,000 employees across 30 countries – the majority of whom are based in poor areas of Asia, Africa and the Middle East – the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)'s most valuable resource is its employees. Their work and commitment are essential to achieving the Network's overall mission of improving the welfare and prospects of local, disadvantaged populations. By the same token, these AKDN employees

who help to create a better quality of life in their communities would benefit from a workplace environment that encourages them to be more aware of their and their families' health and well-being and to take action to prevent illnesses and adopt healthy lifestyles.

AKDN Workplace Wellness

Started in 2005 as an HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention initiative that was shown to reduce the rate of AIDS-related absences and death amongst AKDN employees, the Programme expanded its scope in 2011 to address the overall wellness needs of AKDN employees, their families, the contractor firms and the immediate communities.

As promoted through the new AKDN Workplace Wellness Programme, well-being includes awareness, prevention and care of communicable and non-communicable diseases (including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria); promotion of healthy behaviours and lifestyles (avoiding smoking, alcohol, unhealthy foods and reducing stress

through promoting a sound work-life balance); and ensuring social protection and financial well-being. The Programme is focused on adapting good practices pertaining to physical, psychosocial and financial well-being learnt from AKDN companies that have had a successful history of corporate social responsibility.

Physical Well-being

The Programme encourages employees and their families to take steps to adopt healthy lifestyles, eliminate unhealthy behaviour and habits, and prevent the onset or worsening of an ill-health condition. Key focal areas include:

- Voluntary Counselling and Testing camps for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections;
- prevention of illnesses including malaria, tuberculosis, water-borne diseases;
- general health/nutrition counselling;
- screening and preventive care;
- disease management programmes for illnesses such as AIDS, diabetes, hypertension and cancers;
- fitness programmes;
- smoking cessation programmes.

Given its large global workforce and the diversity of its non-profit institutions and project companies (which operate on commercial models), AKDN has a unique opportunity to reach a large number of employees, their families and immediate communities through its Workplace Wellness Programme.



Development Partners

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

For further information

AKDN Workplace Wellness Programme
Mr Joshua Ongwae, Programme Manager
Aga Khan University
Advanced Nursing Studies
3rd Parklands Avenue, House #33
P.O Box 39340-00623
Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254 20 3662014
Mobile: +254 73 1973788
Email: joshua.ongwae@aku.edu
Website: http://www.akdn.org/wellness_programme.asp

Cover photo: *The Aga Khan Development Network's most valuable resource is its employees. The AKDN Workplace Wellness Programme is committed to promoting healthy lifestyle choices – physical, psychosocial and financial – in an environment that enhances employee well-being and productivity.*

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in Africa and Asia. Its agencies work in over 30 countries for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion. Its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society.

Psychosocial Well-being

The Programme also includes measures that enhance the ability of employees to reduce stress and depression associated with conditions such as unemployment, sickness, disability and old age. Referral networks for psychosocial support are recommended to staff needing this support. Key focal areas include:

- counselling for retirement planning and sudden unemployment;
- counselling for balancing work and family life, including child care, parental time with children, associating with friends and family;
- counselling for alcohol and substance abuse that in some cases encourages staff to access rehabilitation centres.

Financial Well-being

Lastly, the Programme enables employees to adopt financial practices that achieve specific goals through informed choices. Participation in financial education and counselling results in improved financial knowledge, attitudes and behaviours; and subsequently, positive changes in financial management practices reduce personal stress and increase workplace productivity. Key focal areas include:

- creating financial awareness;
- counselling on financial goals;
- counselling on household budgeting and finance management;
- retirement and unemployment planning;

- counselling on saving and investing;
- counselling on access to insurance schemes and loan schemes.

Key Successes

During the Programme's initial phase (2005-2010), many AKDN employees reported benefits such as adopting healthier lifestyles and feeling more able to talk about their problems. Likewise, AKDN employers including Serena Hotels and Farmers Choice Ltd. reported improvements in worker productivity and lower rates of absenteeism.

In 2011, when the Programme expanded its scope, it carried out a survey to better understand how AKDN employees were taking measures to protect their health, reduce the risk of disease and improve work-life balance. More than 2,000 questionnaires were completed and returned. A follow-up survey, scheduled for the autumn of 2014, is expected to provide valuable insight to the Programme's impact on employee wellness.

Since 2000, AKDN employers such as Frigoken Ltd. – Kenya's largest producer of processed vegetables – have embraced the broader concept of wellness by establishing and promoting on-site child care centres to further support a healthy, motivated and productive workforce.

