

BREAKOUT SESSION: HEALTH IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

The COVID-19 pandemic and the tragic consequences to which it has given rise in communities all over the world have brought the issue of health to the forefront of the global political and economic agenda in a way rarely seen in modern times. The pandemic has provided a sharp reminder of the critical importance of health and wellbeing as the bedrock for prosperous societies and economies around the world, but also of our interconnectivity with the natural world. It has also revealed an urgent need to strengthen global healthcare systems, and to enhance access to healthcare and healthy lifestyles for the most vulnerable in our societies.

Against this backdrop, this session explored the important role that the private sector, across a broad range of industries, can play in supporting universal access to the highest possible standards of physical health and mental wellbeing, through areas such as: promoting a culture of health and wellbeing at work; supporting resilient and universally accessible healthcare; enabling healthy consumer lifestyles; and protecting planetary health.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There are a wide variety of opportunities for businesses to make positive interventions and drive enhanced health outcomes for their employees and for society as a whole. This is not only beneficial to individuals but also to the business itself in terms of productivity, reputation, legal compliance and access to capital.
- In the workplace, business can foster numerous kinds of health and wellbeing, spanning physical, mental, social, and financial wellbeing. Employees are increasingly expecting businesses to provide holistic health and wellbeing support.
- One important area of intervention is around providing healthy physical environments for employees to work in. Issues such as air and light quality, and tackling factors such as noise pollution can have significant health benefits while also improving productivity.
- Business has an important role to play in supporting enhanced healthcare resilience to future pandemics and shocks.

A wide variety of sectors can play a part in this by helping to identify systemic fragilities, by engaging in public private partnerships to bolster resilience, and by ensuring continued and stable delivery of products and services that the healthcare system relies on.

- All of these efforts however will ultimately be in vain unless we are able to come together to solve the wider issue of planetary health. As the world's ecological boundaries continue to be exceeded, we are staring in the face of an unprecedented health crisis. It is important for business to understand the health implications of factors such as climate change and nature loss and accelerate action in these fields to safeguard human health.

WAY FORWARD

Earlier this year, together with 20 member companies, WBCSD launched a new project: Healthy People, Healthy Business - which aims to develop a cross-cutting narrative around the role of business in supporting health and wellbeing.

This project is building a cross-sectoral coalition to identify private sector priorities and opportunities to drive progress on health promotion and disease prevention.

Specifically, it has four key focus areas:

- Employee health and wellbeing: Promoting corporate initiatives and behaviors that foster the health and wellbeing of employees throughout organizations and value chains.
- Resilient and accessible healthcare: Clearly articulating how multiple sectors can contribute to more resilient and universally accessible healthcare.
- Healthy lifestyles: Identifying critical barriers to healthy lifestyles and exploring business solutions to overcoming them.
- Planetary health: Working with the scientific community to develop a compelling business narrative around the health-related implications of the planetary emergency.

More information
[James Gomme](#)