

WHY AND HOW COMPANIES DECIDE TO INVEST IN THE HEALTH OF THEIR EMPLOYEES & GENDER EQUALITY



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Putting health, including sexual and reproductive health, and gender equality on your company agenda

The importance of sustainable and responsible business conduct is becoming increasingly clear and is demanded by consumers, investors and policy-makers.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals agreed upon in the UN set the frame for a more sustainable future for the world. Collaboration and partnerships between the private sector, civil society and governments are crucial to achieve the goals. Gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights are closely linked and are preconditions for sustainable development. It is highly relevant for private sector companies to integrate these issues into business operations, both because it is a responsibility, but also because it creates healthy and thriving employees.

This folder contains three examples of companies that have integrated health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender equality into their business conduct in a way that makes sense for their company, their employees and the context in which their business is operating. They do this because it is their responsibility towards their employees, but also because it simply is good business and makes good sense. ■

"Investing in health and gender equality is simply good business and makes good sense."



By providing information and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services in the workplace, including e.g. family planning, access to contraception and by ensuring preventive measures against sexual harassment, companies contribute to a better future for both female and male employees and communities, and empower them as individuals and as staff members.



Danper in Peru

WHO?

Danper is a large Peruvian-Danish joint venture with more than 20 years of experience in the agro industry. The company has a large number of employees – more than 6,500 people – engaged in the various work areas on their farms, including producing and packaging. In some areas of the company, there are high numbers of young women, who are single mothers, and often survivors of home-based violence. This has prompted the company to introduce a range of health initiatives to meet the needs of their employees.

HOW?

Danper has over the past 20 years developed a number of sexual and reproductive health related activities:

- Pregnant employees are offered prenatal care on a monthly basis and work tasks are altered according to the pregnant woman's needs.
- A Planned Parenthood programme, which provides female staff with family planning methods, and advises them on the use of contraception.
- An onsite clinic with health professionals that the employees can visit.
- Employees are offered testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.
- Offers pediatric care, dental care, muscular-skeletal disorder prevention and vaccination programmes.

Finally, the company has a high strategic focus on gender equality and empowerment both in terms of their own employees, but also in local communities. The company is one of only five Latin American companies with an EDGE certification, awarded for their commitment to promote equal opportunities for development among men and women in the workplace. They have regular awareness-raising campaigns focusing on issues such as violence against women and gender equality.

"At Danper, men and women are treated equally and have the same rights in terms of promotion and acknowledgement. This makes me feel very comfortable"

Daniela Flores Aguilar, Packing facilities worker

WHY?

Danper does this primarily to ensure the welfare of their employees, but they also do it to ensure the progress of the company and to create loyal employees who are less absent due to the health-related issues. Since introducing the benefits, the company has experienced:

- A 1.5% reduction in absenteeism rates (from 2012-2015), meaning reduced loss of production days.
- Lower turnover, meaning less time and resources spent on recruitment and training of new employees as well as lower error rates in production.
- Increased employee motivation, productivity and loyalty towards the company. ■



By empowering and acknowledging your employees through health initiatives, you get a loyal and productive workforce. As a leader you must develop the human capital and create fighters for the course of the company...

Rosario Bazán, CEO at Danper, Peru



PERU

- 31.4 million people
- Life expectancy: 71.5 (m) 76.8 (f)
- Maternal mortality: 68 per 100,000 live births
- On average, each woman has 2.5 children

DANPER

- Peruvian-Danish joint venture in the agro-industry
- Grows, harvests, processes and exports fruits, vegetables, grains, etc. globally
- Employs more than 6,500 employees, 49% are female

Great Lakes Port, APM Terminals in Kenya

WHO?

Great Lakes Port is a part of the Danish A.P. Moller-Maersk Group, founded in 1904, which now operates in 130 countries and employs more than 89,000 people globally. The Maersk Group is known for its commitment to responsible business conduct and especially safety, security and health are core focus areas for the Maersk Group due to the risks connected with the shipping, logistics, oil and gas industries. The Great Lakes Port branch operates in Mombasa, Kenya, where the population is challenged by significant health issues related to their sexual and reproductive health, with low use of contraception, high numbers of unplanned pregnancies, and many people living with HIV/AIDS.

HOW?

- The company provides private health insurance, which covers reproductive health issues.
- Provides an 18 weeks maternity leave, compared to the 12 weeks that are required by Kenyan law.
- The company has incorporated a focus on health in its weekly Safety Talks. Topics such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases have been included, with the aim of creating awareness about transmission, symptoms and prevention.

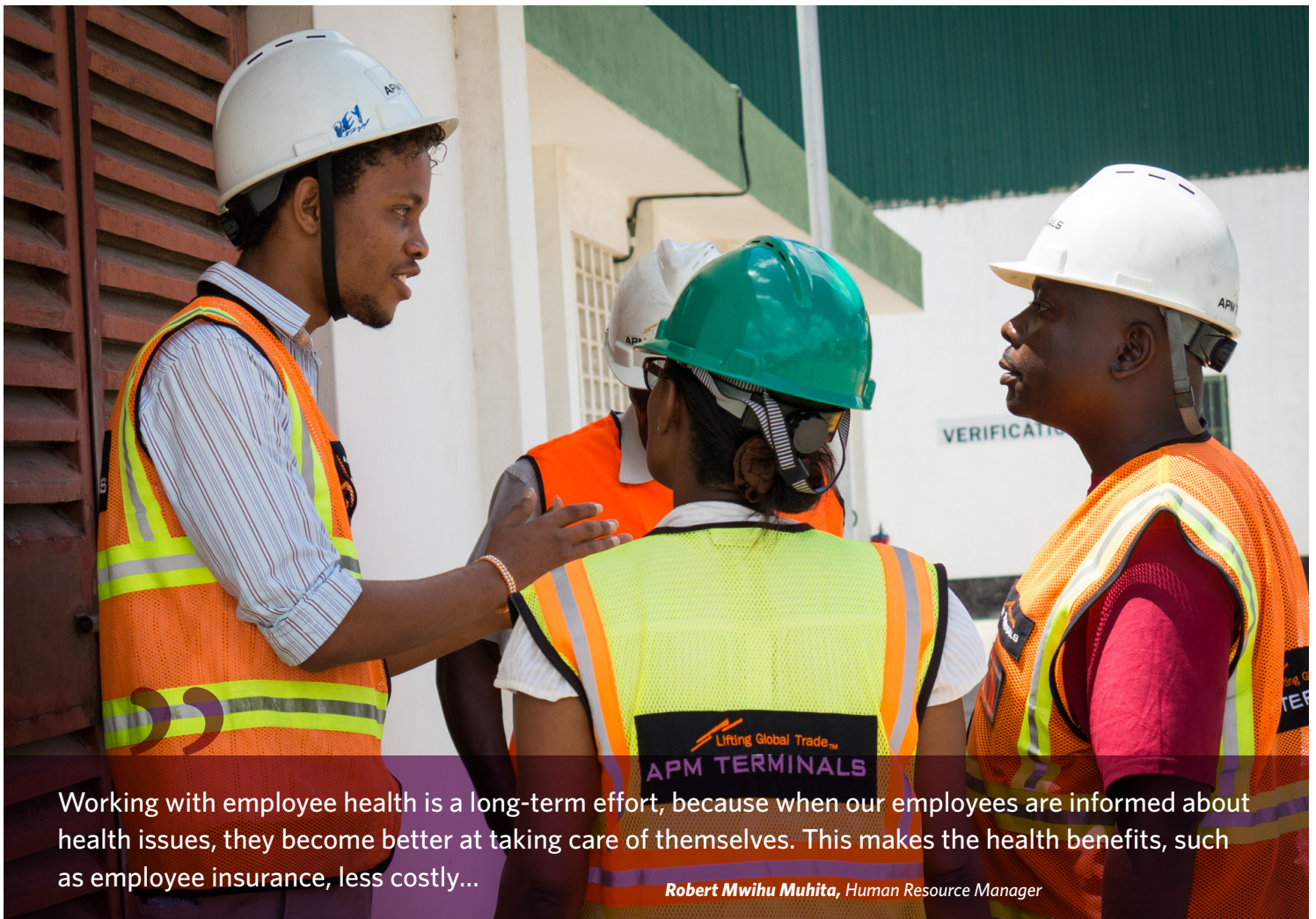
Besides this, after the company experienced an issue with female employees leaving the company within 12 months of returning from maternity leave, the company chose to actively counter this trend by improving the conditions, which includes a 20% reduction in hours for up to 26 weeks after returning from maternity leave. This, combined with flexible working hours, makes it possible for female staff members to go home and nurse their babies. By introducing these gender-sensitive workplace benefits, the company is ensuring that female staff members are able to balance their work and home life, making them able to remain in paid employment and contribute to the economy:

“After returning from maternity leave, the reduced and flexible working hours at Great Lakes Port make it easier for me to balance my time at work and my responsibilities as a mother at home”

Mercy Laboso, Accounts Payables Lead

WHY?

One of the reasons behind Great Lakes Port introducing health-related benefits is that the company is committed to achieving diversity in their workforce and ensuring female representation in leadership positions. This is more easily obtained when the company takes into account that their female employees have a large burden of household commitments in addition to their paid work. Furthermore, the company provides employee health benefits because it is good business. Actively contributing to employee health is both a matter of doing sustainable and responsible business, but it is also a way of ensuring healthier, more productive and motivated employees. ■



KENYA

- 47.2 million people
- Life expectancy: 62 (m) 59 (f)
- Maternal mortality: 448 per 100,000 live births
- Fertility rate: 3.9 children per woman

GREAT LAKES PORT

- Part of the Danish A. P. Moller-Maersk Group operating in Kenya and 129 other countries
- Leading global port and cargo inland services provider
- 60 employees of which 40% are female
- The mid-level management team comprises of 9 employees, of which 6 are female

Georg Jensen in Thailand

WHO?

Georg Jensen is a more than 100-year old Danish company, producing quality jewelry and handicrafts. In 2004, the company moved part of its production to Chiang Mai, Thailand, and over that past 10 years the number of employees in the Thailand factory has grown from 225 to 631.

HOW?

- The company provides private health insurance to staff, which includes coverage for up to three children.
- The company has an on-site clinic with a full-time nurse dedicated to provide health care to staff members during working hours. In case of more serious health issues, the company shows flexibility towards staff so they are able to go to the hospital.
- The company organises regular health talks; the nurse provides a brief health talk over the loudspeaker every Friday, covering for example seasonal diseases such as dengue fever or the zika virus, or the nurse takes up health issues encountered in treatment of staff during the week.

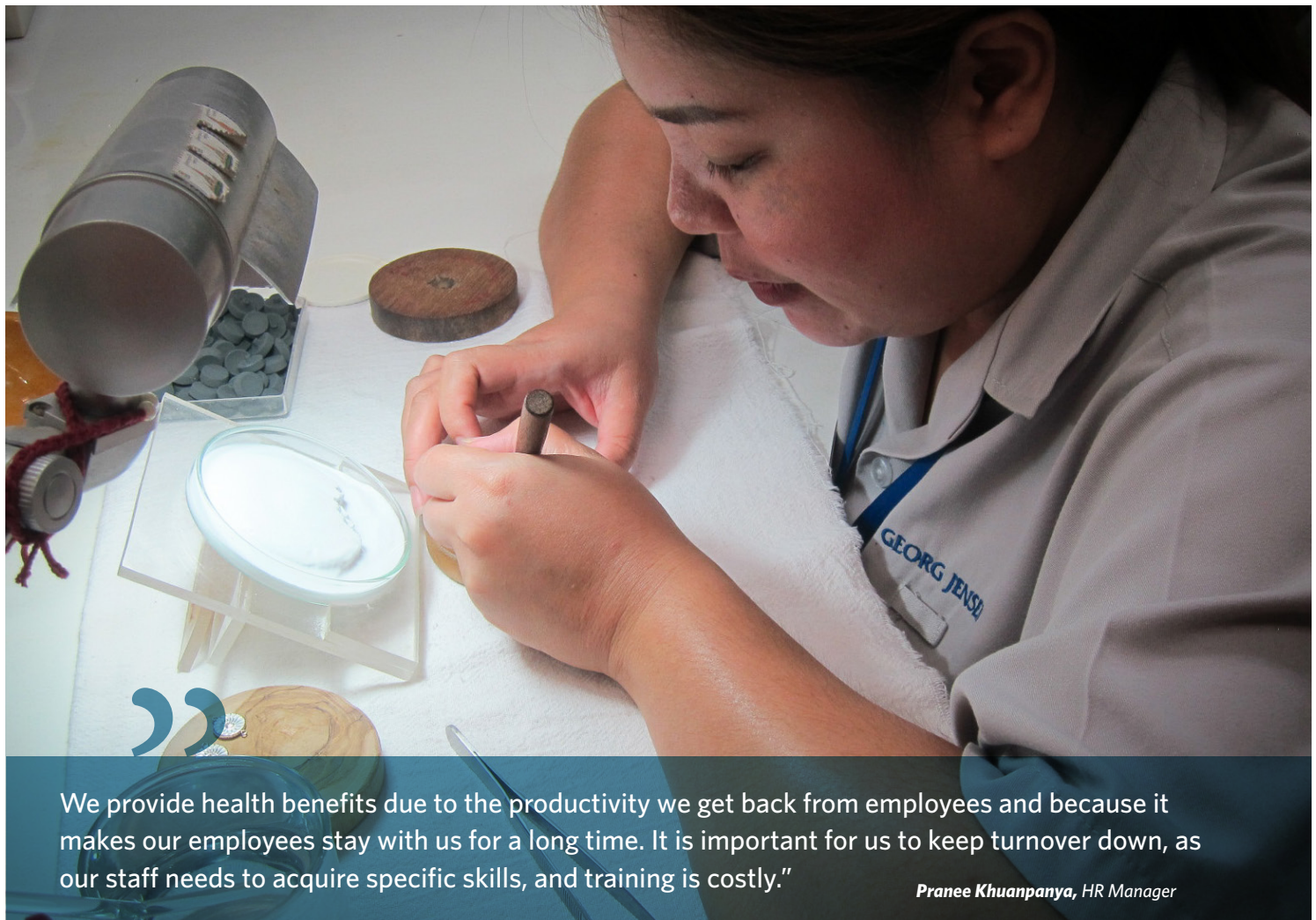
- The company pays special attention to the employees with families. New mothers are allowed to take maternity leave with full pay, which is twice as long as what national law prescribes, and the nurse organises health talks for expectant mothers and fathers about pregnancy, delivery and childcare.
- Finally, the company has an on-site daycare facility for employees' children, which is particularly used by single mothers.

"At the on-site health clinic at Georg Jensen I can seek care immediately rather than waiting until after hours for expensive, time-consuming treatment."

Mrs. Ketsarin Kaewruan, Laser Department

WHY?

Georg Jensen in Thailand has incorporated health in their business strategy in a way that combines specific health services (on-site clinic, nurse and maternity leave) with health information (health talks) and with financial security (health insurance). The company does this because to them a healthy employee is a positive employee with fewer sick days. Furthermore, good health benefits help the company keep turnover down, which is especially important, as training is costly. ■



THAILAND

- Population: 68,147,000
- Life expectancy: 77.6 (f) / 70.8 (m)
- Maternal mortality: 20 per 100,000 live births
- Fertility rate: 1.5 children per woman

GEORG JENSEN

- Danish company with part of production in Thailand
- Design and production of gold and silver jewelry and silver cutlery.
- The factory in Thailand has 631 employees, of which 40% are female

Challenges and opportunities related to integrating health in a company setting

Considering the cultural context

The cultural context plays an important role in the way companies can operate, which is why this should be considered when introducing health-related benefits at a workplace. There may be topics that are taboo, and challenging to address, because a company is situated in a setting where it is not accepted to talk openly about topics such as menstruation, contraception or sexually transmitted diseases. In order to address such issues, it can be a good idea to initiate health information campaigns within the company as well as within the local community to spread knowledge, create awareness and accommodate any misunderstandings.

Making employee health a strategic priority

For many companies, employees' health is not a topic dealt with neither very often nor at a strategic level within the companies. The importance of good health for employees' work performance, absenteeism rates and motivation, which consequently affects the success of the business, is often underestimated. Consequently, it is important to ensure top management support to guarantee that health strategies are anchored within companies as a strategic focus area. Furthermore, having a well-functioning health and safety

committee that includes a broad focus on health can be an effective instrument to ensure that health is structurally integrated in the company in a satisfactory manner.

Giving life to policies and benefits

Many companies have good health policies in place that go beyond both expectation and legislation – on paper. However, having an HIV/AIDS policy, a sexual harassment policy, and visions for gender equality does not necessarily have an actual impact if employees are not aware of the benefits, existing policies and their rights. The employees only benefit from offered health programmes, if they are informed about these in a manner that matches their educational level and cultural background.





Likewise, the companies only experience the economic and social benefits from investing in employee health if they ensure that their health policies are communicated broadly.

Health benefits are good business, but without documentation, the positive effects remain hidden

Few companies carry out systematic calculations of the impact their employees' health situation has on their businesses, and what changes they experience from investing in programmes that lift employees' health. By calculating and documenting the effects of health-related initiatives it is possible to pave the way for integrating health investments in the business strategy as an essential asset and for seeing such investments as pivotal for maintaining or increasing the company's productivity and quality of product.

This may once and for all establish a common understanding among private companies that health, beyond occupational safety, is important to address in the workplace and should not be reduced to being a private sphere issue. ■

ABOUT US

IFU // IFU creates development on a commercial basis. Through investments in private companies in developing countries and emerging markets in Africa, Asia, Latin America and parts of Europe, we help to establish companies that provide a bottom line profit and have derived positive development effects for employees, partners and society.

DFPA // The Danish Family Planning Association is a private, non-governmental organisation (NGO) without religious or political affiliations, and the Danish member association of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the world's largest sexual and reproductive health and rights organisation. DFPA has been working in developing countries for more than 20 years addressing young people, women and men's sexual and reproductive health and rights. In recent years, DFPA has increasingly engaged with the private sector in developing countries, partnering with companies, and workplaces in general, as a platform for strengthening the sexual and reproductive health and rights of employees in a way that benefits both people and companies.

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