Taking Stock, Taking Action—
When Hunger Is No Longer Hidden

Companies from around the world showed innovative business approaches to tackle malnutrition through the successful GAIN Marketplace. The Forum fostered new partnerships and enabled GAIN Business Alliance members from the length of the supply chain to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable fortification initiatives.

by CSD Consulting and Michael Jarvis

The GAIN Business Alliance Global Forum (March 22–23, 2007), sponsored by GAIN and the World Bank Institute, brought together over 200 business leaders from the food and agriculture industries, as well as federal and state Ministers and officials from India. Those in attendance set themselves to the task of working to develop innovative business models that would ensure public health benefits for the under-privileged and increased profitability for businesses. This was the second Global Forum of the Alliance, but the first since the formation of the business chapters from Africa, China, Europe and North America. The India chapter was officially launched at the event.

The Delhi meeting brought the GAIN Business Alliance to the next step of its global journey, building on the momentum from the first Global Forum in Beijing in 2005. Media personality and moderator Rini Simon-Khanna set the tone for the two-day meeting, and reminded all why it was so appropriate to host the Forum in South Asia, when she stated that half of the world’s malnourished people live in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, most of them women and children. A survey on malnutrition released just before the Forum revealed that in some cases, Indian malnutrition figures were worse than those in sub-Saharan Africa, although disproportionate to the country’s economic and public health indices.

Such daunting figures presented a challenge and an opportunity for GAIN, noted Jay Naidoo, Chairman of the GAIN Board in his welcome address, “If the subject of malnutrition is being spoken about, it is some measure of success in the mis
sion that unites us all. GAIN would like to be part of the solution.”

GAIN officials left no one in doubt that the Forum would showcase innovative solutions to tackling malnutrition, which is responsible for 55 percent of child deaths worldwide. “Each of these deaths is preventable – malnutrition continues to haunt the development agenda and we hope to tackle this through a series of actions that include public-private partnerships,” said Marc Van Ameringen, Executive Director of GAIN. “We do not have a blueprint or a road map, but we are committed to working with all of you to find a way,” he added.

**The Gain Marketplace**

At the heart of the program in Delhi was the GAIN Marketplace. This new format provided a space to companies from around the world to display their innovative approaches and products, be it fortified soy sauce, flour, or biscuits. All bore testimony to the fact that many of the companies present had already embarked on the process of innovating to provide nutritious food for the under privileged at price points that were affordable and marginally aspirational.

Bérangère Magarinos, GAIN’s Senior Manager, Investments and Partnerships who led the process, summed up the expectations of this innovation when she said GAIN wanted to bring the vibrancy of the marketplace to capture innovation, dialogue and a free and fair exchange of ideas that would make a robust and responsible interlocutor for companies seeking solutions to malnutrition while working in the domain they know best. “We will tackle malnutrition through a movement that involves a large number of actors in society and the GAIN marketplace is a microcosm of that reality,” she said.

Over 30 companies representing GAIN’s four business alliances used the marketplace to seek answers, shop for solutions and find new partners. Participants were enthusiastic, and commented that they would like to further develop the GAIN Marketplace concept, since nothing works as well as demonstrating capacity in ways that people can see and assimilate.

**New partnerships**

GAIN’s commitment to supporting private sector initiatives for improved nutrition is reflected in their formal partnerships with Alliance members. The Global Forum saw the signing of two new partnerships. The first was with the Bangalore-based Britannia Industries Limited, among India’s largest biscuit companies. The company will make fortified biscuits for Indian government school feeding programs initially and then introduce the product in the open market. The second was with the Hyderabad-based Naandi Foundation, a not-
for-profit organization founded with support of the pharmaceutical company Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories, and will also harness corporate support for nutritious school feeding.

GAIN also seeks to enable partnering among Alliance members outside of their direct involvement, and was delighted to provide a platform on the first day of the conference to announce a link up between UNICEF and BASF. The BASF Social Foundation committed seed funding for the new partnership in support of UNICEF’s programs for essential child nutrition. As the world’s leading chemical company, Prasad Chandran, the Chairman and Managing Director of BASF India said he would encourage all of his 90,000 employees to take an active interest in fighting malnutrition.

Launch of the GAIN India Business Alliance
Oscar Fernandes, Minister of Labour, Government of India formally launched the India Chapter of the GAIN Business Alliance on March 23, 2007. Fernandes praised business success that contributes to making India a vibrant economy, but said companies must not forget the face of the hungry and malnourished child they saw every day on the streets of India. “Unemployment leads to poverty and starvation and as the country’s labour minister, I pledge to work with organizations such as GAIN to do what is necessary to make malnutrition a thing of the past.” He congratulated GAIN for its innovative initiative and invited business leaders from around the world find cost-effective and relevant solutions to the problem.

Dr. Anji Reddy formally took over the reins as Chair of the India Chapter and invited all present to work with GAIN as an enabler and catalyst for partnerships with the clear purpose of dealing with malnutrition on a large scale.

Ramesh Vangal, CEO of the Katra Group who delivered the keynote address succinctly summed up the challenge facing the business community and the world of public health when he said innovation, to be successful, had to keep in mind five imperatives which were:

- Appropriate – solutions had to be home grown so as to ensure sustainability
- Affordable – innovations could never lose sight of their affordability for affected populations
- Acceptable – people had to find the solutions acceptable in order to embrace them
- Awareness – communicate the message so as to make people aware of the advantages
- Accessible – scaling was key and lessons could be learnt from corporate distribution networks

Five Chapters, One Alliance
The session on Five Chapters, One Alliance brought together the regional managers of GAIN to present their work and discuss future steps. They provided

Marc van Ameringen, Executive Director of GAIN, Jay Naidoo, Chair of the GAIN Board, and Vinita Bali, Managing Director, Britannia Industries, celebrate the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between GAIN and the biscuit company.
insights into their work in building and shepherding the chapters in Africa, China, India, Europe and North America and reported some of the core messages from consultations with their corporate members:

- The international business community recognizes the importance of emerging markets, such as India
- Malnutrition is too vast and complex a problem to be solved by any one entity or organization
- As part of their chapter of the Business Alliance, companies will actively work together with GAIN as an enabler of solutions and processes
- Scaling impact is key
- Companies seeking market share have a duty to ensure that their workforce is healthy

Djordijia Petkoski, program leader of WBI’s Business, Competitiveness and Development program applauded the work of the chapters. “The GAIN Business Alliance is the only one of its kind,” he explained, “a learning and knowledge sharing platform for companies around the world to see how they can contribute to tackle malnutrition, raise awareness on the issue, discuss common difficulties and help develop new business models to reach poor consumers with fortified foods.”

The Road Ahead
The Forum concluded with some answers and some new questions, most of them relating to the challenge of scaling small and scattered initiatives undertaken by companies, governments, groups and individuals to reach the affected populations. “We are open to new ideas, we will listen and we will work with all of you to develop local solutions to what is truly a global problem,” said Jay Naidoo, GAIN Board Chair.

Marc van Ameringen, Executive Director of GAIN echoed those words as those of all the business and political leaders attending the India meet when he said teams work better than individuals, and that GAIN would be present at every opportunity to enable, catalyze and direct work aimed at making malnutrition a thing of the past.

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Mark your calendars for the Third Global Forum of the GAIN Business Alliance!

Brussels, Belgium
Spring 2008

Details will be made available at www.gainhealth.org.