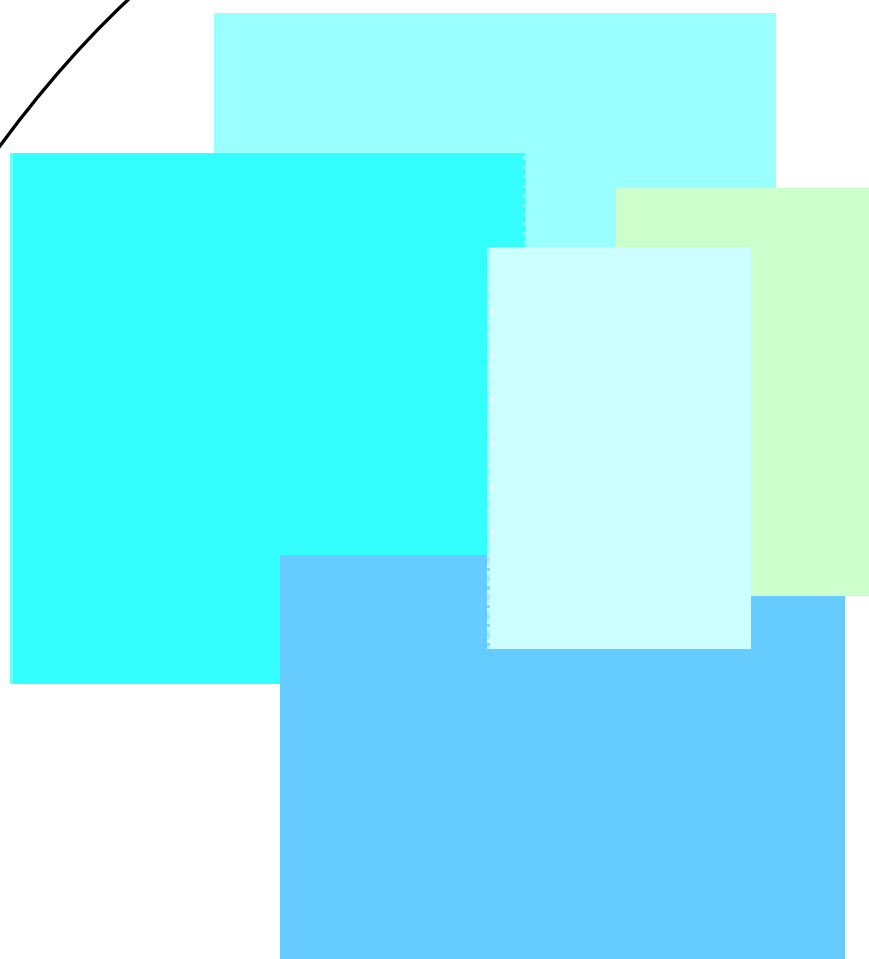


**GSO Programme on Diabetes and Social Responsibility**

# **Forum to Adopt and Implement a Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness**

25 September 2008  
Geneva, Switzerland

## **FORUM REPORT**



Geneva Social Observatory



## Executive Summary

In October 2006, the Geneva Social Observatory launched a multi-year project on Diabetes and Social Responsibility in the World of Work. Participants have included leaders from governments, corporations and international organizations for a series of multi-stakeholder roundtables that were convened in Geneva in late 2006 and early 2007, and have culminated in a comprehensive strategy to address diabetes in the workplace.

The *Workplace Strategy* developed from a report on the roundtable series that was presented at two briefings in connection with the World Health Assembly in May 2007 and at the International Labour Conference in June 2007. With input from these briefings, the Roundtable Planning Committee started to implement the action plan by concentrating on the drafting of a Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness, along with consolidating existing data and information on the impact of the global diabetes epidemic on the workplace. Additional research and a two-day workshop in March 2008 produced a first draft of the strategy.

At the Forum on 25 September 2008, participants heard presentations on existing wellness programmes and spent significant time in working groups to finalize details and adaptations to the components of the draft strategy. At the end of the Forum, the *Workplace Strategy* was adopted by participants and focuses on the following four main components:

- The world of work is an ideal place to **disseminate information** and to improve general knowledge about the diabetes epidemic and what can be done about it.
- There are steps that can be taken to **mobilize for action**, to develop better data and risk assessments through the working environment.
- The strategy identifies the range of interventions to **manage the monitoring and treatment** of the diabetic condition.

The strategy concludes with a menu of options that can and should be taken to **maintain a healthy work environment** and to promote wellness in order to prevent and mitigate the onset of the diabetic condition among people in the world of work. This report provides details on the development, formulation and adoption of the ***Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness***.

The Geneva Social Observatory (GSO) was founded in 2004 to provide a neutral setting in the Geneva international arena for constructive dialogue on global social issues. More specifically, the mission of the GSO is to initiate dialogue on social issues in order to encourage leaders to engage in a broadened search for solutions and policy coherence. For more information about the GSO and the Programme on Diabetes and Social Responsibility, please visit the GSO website at [www.gsogeneva.ch](http://www.gsogeneva.ch).



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## **I. Introduction and Background**

The momentum for the GSO Programme on Diabetes and Social Responsibility has come from the growing evidence of a global epidemic of diabetes increasingly affecting men and women of working age in developing and transitional countries but with limited awareness or appreciation of the serious impact of the epidemic on people's lives. The Programme is further motivated by the recognition that diabetes is a growing global epidemic with alarming statistics of premature death and disability. It is a condition that is increasingly affecting working age people all around the world, with devastating implications for productivity and sustainable livelihoods. Also of concern is the increasing incidence of diabetes amongst children and teenagers. Prevention and early management of the disease can have a significant impact, and yet the epidemic continues to grow.

Given the gravity of the diabetes epidemic, the GSO launched a multi-year Programme on Diabetes and Social Responsibility to mobilize awareness and stimulate action with the support of a multi-stakeholder Planning Committee. At its first meeting, the Committee chose a thematic emphasis on the world of work. The Committee agreed that a series of roundtables should be convened in Geneva to draw on the diverse actors and experts in the Geneva international arena. The series was intended to lead to a better understanding of how diabetes affects the workplace and what different actors (employers, workers, health professionals, the media, etc) can do about it. The first two roundtables addressed these objectives. This was followed by a third roundtable where working groups were asked to develop recommendations for an action plan. At the conclusion of the third roundtable, the recommendations from the working groups were consolidated into a list of action items.

The recommendations and supporting documentation from the three roundtables were published in a report, available both in hard copy and on the GSO website. The report then served as the basis for two briefings to promote further outreach. The Planning Committee also reviewed the recommendations and identified a number of them for further GSO engagement. Priorities from the action plan to highlight the importance of developing a basic workplace strategy to serve as a framework for incorporating diabetes awareness and action for prevention and mitigation of diabetes into the world of work.

It was determined that the strategy should serve as a framework for guidance to employers on the range of policy and practical implementation issues that they might effectively address on diabetes in the workplace. A workshop was held in March 2008 to provide an overview of existing wellness programmes and to allow for multistakeholder input into a preliminary draft of a workplace strategy. The Planning Committee further refined the developed workplace strategy document in May and June, sent it out to workshop participants and incorporated their suggestions into a final draft.

The mandate for the 25 September 2008 GSO Forum to Adopt and Implement a Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness was to refine the first draft of the workplace strategy and address adaptations needed for implementation in Africa and Asia. The draft was refined with the goals of: 1) persuading employers and other relevant parties that it is in their best interest to promote employee well-being and 2) providing general guidance for employers and other interested parties on steps to take to effectively prevent and/or



manage diabetes and resulting complications in their workforce. The Forum highlighted existing workplace wellness programmes and examples of programme implementation in India and Swaziland.

The draft strategy was provided in advance of the Forum to help participants prepare for the task of refining the draft strategy and reflecting on adaptations required for successful implementation. Given the current global momentum for promoting health lifestyles and “wellness programmes” in the workplace, presentations were organized to inform participants of existing workplace programmes and examples of programme implementations. While much that can be done to address diabetes is also applicable to workplace wellness and other chronic diseases generally, there are aspects of the diabetes epidemic that merit this special attention.

The Forum held on 25 September 2008 attracted 36 participants from a wide range of organizations including the World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, the Mauritius Ministry of Education, International Council of Nurses, and private companies including Procter & Gamble, DuPont, BT, Eli Lilly & Co., Pfizer, Merck, and sanofi-aventis. The Forum included two panel discussion, three working group sessions and plenary discussion. The dynamic of the Forum meetings allowed for feedback from experts on diabetes and workplace policies to be incorporated into the strategy and for the participants to formally adopt the document after discussion and working group sessions. This report outlines the important presentations and discussions that were made at the Forum and the refinements of the *Workplace Strategy* that lead to the adoption of the document, as well as adaptations for specific regions around the world.

## II. Opening Plenary

GSO Executive Director Dr. Katherine Hagen opened the workshop with an overview of the history of the GSO and the evolution of the multisectoral dialogue on the topic of diabetes. The process started with a series of roundtables (Phase One) which produced an action plan (for Phase Two of the project). Dr. Hagen highlighted the need for broadened dissemination, among employers, of information about the impact of the diabetes epidemic on the workplace and the adoption of a workplace strategy to address the diabetes epidemic. She further emphasized the urgency for action to combat the spreading epidemic in developing countries and the need for adaptations to the strategy in different regions around the world. Participants were urged to focus on strategy refinements that incorporate a compelling rationale for concerted action, and include specific targeted actions on diabetes as a complement to action on chronic diseases generally, and avenues for practical and effective prevention and treatment.

### Welcome Speech

A welcome speech was delivered by Dr. Tayo Fashoyin, Director, Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration Department at the International Labour Organization. Dr. Fashoyin emphasized the importance of addressing diabetes in the context of workplace wellness and challenged the group to refine the strategy in a practical and realistic manner. He focused on the need to develop partnerships and collaborations in the field of health and wellness and recognized that the strategy needed to be employee-centric,



adaptable and above all, sustainable. This message echoed the discussions and key points that were raised by participants throughout the Forum and the principles were incorporated into the final strategy document.

## Illustrative Presentations

After Dr. Fashoyin's welcome, Ms. Meredith Bullamore Hanna provided a brief overview of the challenges associated with living with diabetes and the difficulties of developing a strategy aimed at targeting Type 1, Type 2 and Gestational Diabetes. She urged participants to keep these challenges in mind when listening to the presentations and finalizing the strategy document. The strategy must reach beyond preconceived notions of diabetes and chronic disease and provide a holistic approach to workplace wellness that is adaptable to the different types of diabetes and different regions and cultures.

The **first panel** discussion was moderated by Ms. Sylvia Lion, Director Europe Advocacy and Professional Relations Endocrinology for Eli Lilly & Co. Dr. Paul Litchfield, Chief Medical Officer of BT Group, presented '**Diabetes: Building on Workplace Wellness**', which highlighted his experience in implementing a workplace strategy that incorporates multiple aspects of health and wellness for employees. The importance of engaging all members of the workforce and developing a strategy that addressed the serious complications of diabetes, while accurately informing and engaging employees was highlighted in the success of the wellness programme at the BT Group.

Dr. Gayle Crozier-Willi, Public Affairs Manager for Nestle SA presented '**Strategies for Implementation**', and highlighted the wellness strategies and education points that were considered and incorporated into Nestlé's existing workplace wellness programme. Nestlé's programme strategy focused linking workplace strategies to business objectives and securing top-management 'buy-in' to provide a supportive environment for employees to focus on health and nutrition. Resulting discussion was on the importance of including the lessons learned into the workplace strategy, by emphasizing the need to develop an engaging environment for employees and presenting a persuasive and business minded message to secure top management support of wellness initiatives. The resulting strategy message should be simple, consistent and easily relayed to highlight the important benefits that workplace programmes can have on business productivity and employee, family and community wellness.

Dr. Litchfield moderated a **second panel** of presentations that included '**Implementing the strategy in India**', by Dr. Dorairaj Prabhakaran, which highlighted the success of a programme in India with six companies developing workplace wellness programmes. Dr. Prabhakaran presented the findings of the study, which included the increased quality of health for the employees, but also noted several challenges to the implementation and cited funding, accessibility and replication as the main issues.

Ms. Thabsile D'lamini, President of the Swaziland Nurses Association/Wellness Centre for Healthcare Workers presented '**Wellness Centres for Health Care Workers and Their Families**' which demonstrated both the highlights and the challenges of executing the Wellness Centre for Healthcare workers. Ms. D'lamini noted that the programme has been successful in reducing the amount of stress that healthcare workers experience on a



daily basis and also provided higher quality and consistent treatment for both work-related illnesses and general wellness.

Discussion after the presentations expanded on the importance of developing a strategy that remained appealing to both employers and employees in a highly global economy, but recognized the importance of keeping the strategy simple and safe to implement while cost effective and sustainable for businesses. Participants noted that the findings presented reflected many elements already incorporated in the draft strategy, but also highlighted the need to develop cultural adaptations and guidelines to make the strategy feasible indifferent regions around the world. The discussion points raised from the presentations were outlined as topics to discuss in detail during the afternoon working group sessions.

### III. The Working Groups

In the afternoon, three working groups were organized to discuss the following topics:

1. **Refining the Workplace Strategy for Implementation**
2. **Adaptations in Asia for Implementation**
3. **Adaptations in Africa for Implementation**

These topics were substantiated as important considerations during the morning presentations, so participants divided into three groups to discuss refinements to the draft strategy and to discuss adaptations needed to implement the strategy in Africa and Asia.

**Working group 1** focused on **Refining the Workplace Strategy for Implementation**. It was moderated by Meredith Bullamore Hanna. The rapporteur for the group was Dr. Crozier-Willi, of Nestlé SA. The group focused on studying each section of the draft strategy and making edits that incorporated the themes of the presentations in the morning and the discussion that followed. Sections were crafted to present a more streamlined message that focused on addressing the health needs of employees and the business approaches of corporations. The group consensus was that the strategy did not need exceptional changes, but rather tweaks to incorporate the points raised in the morning into a clearer and more simplified message that remains consistent throughout the strategy document. The suggestions of the group were presented and accepted by participants after the working group session and have been incorporated into the attached strategy document.

**Working group 2** on **Adaptations in Asia for Implementation** was moderated by Ms. Karin Holm. The rapporteur was Ms. Lucy Howe López. The group focused on the presentation by Dr. Prabhakaran and the vast international experience of participants to better understand the barriers to implementing the strategy in Asia and developed a document, presented as Appendix C of the **Workplace Strategy**. When reporting in the afternoon plenary session, the group stressed the importance of taking a practical approach in Asia and incorporating local customs that will be sustainable and manageable for citizens, but also developing a message that will appeal to the many different types and levels of business active in Asia today.





**Working group 3** focused on **Adaptations in Africa for Implementation** was moderated and recorded by Dr. David Gold. The group acknowledged that there are many unique challenges and barriers to addressing diabetes in Africa and encouraged a holistic and local approach to implementation. This is due, in large part, to the fact that most of Africa's economy is in the informal sector, and the corporate structures and workplace wellness programmes are largely absent in Africa. The group acknowledged that the draft strategy components could be adapted to the informal sector by utilizing the formal sector, identifying community leaders and educators to teach the components of the strategy and adding a local and cultural component to the simplified, consistent message. The group encouraged a focus on government support of the strategy through presentations at regional and international meetings, with a focus on both economic impacts and public health implications.

At the conclusion of the working group sessions, groups presented summaries and then final suggestions for the strategy, which were discussed, debated and accepted by the group during the final plenary session.

## IV. Conclusions

### Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness

The output from the meeting is a refined **Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness**, which provides a discussion on the large impact that the diabetes epidemic will have on global health in the next decades and includes appendices that outline implementation suggestions for Africa and Asia. The document can be obtained from the GSO website at [www.gsogeneva.ch](http://www.gsogeneva.ch).

### Conclusions

In the closing plenary, workshop participants had the opportunity to strategize about the process for the dissemination of the Strategy. It was noted that the strategy would be refined and redistributed to reflect the valuable contributions during the Forum. Dr. Hagen explained that the GSO is prepared to move forward with the adopted strategy by exploring unique and innovative opportunities for members of governments and the private sector to reflect on implementation of the Strategy, and to develop training programmes in areas that the Forum and planning committee have identified as needing particular adaptations for implementation. Asia and Africa are two regions of interest for continued consideration, but the GSO also welcomed participants to suggest areas of need or interest that will benefit from the strategy.

The GSO has been instrumental in moving the important topics first discussed in the initial roundtable series into a formal action plan that has now evolved into a strategy to address diabetes and chronic disease in the workplace and that has been accepted by international leaders. This leaves the GSO uniquely poised to chart new territory and raise the awareness of the challenges of living with diabetes and maintaining good health in the workplace through a strategy that is adaptable to different regions in the world, different sectors of the workplace and applicable to employers, employees and their





communities. Participants were encouraged to visit the [GSO website](#) for document downloads available from the meeting, in addition to documents from events leading up to the Forum and the adoption of the strategy. Updates on the GSO's involvement with strategy implementation around the world will be on the website, when available.

Dr. Hagen welcomed additional ideas to be voiced and asked the audience to seek additional innovative opportunities to present and disseminate the *Workplace Strategy*. She concluded the Forum by thanking the participants for their openness, enthusiasm and efficacy which resulted in a highly productive and successful series of roundtables, workshops and forums with a strong strategy that will have a strong impact on addressing the challenges of diabetes and wellness in the workplace.

## V. Supplementary Documents and Presentations

For a complete history of the Diabetes in the Workplace Roundtable series and resulting meetings, events and forums, please consult the GSO's website at [www.gsogeneva.ch](http://www.gsogeneva.ch). Documents from the Forum are available to download on the website or by request at [contact@gsogeneva.ch](mailto:contact@gsogeneva.ch).

### *Presentations made during the Workshop*

- Workshop Overview, Katherine Hagen, GSO Executive Director
- Welcome Speech, Tayo Fashoyin, Director, Social Dialogue, Labor Law and Labour Administration Department, International Labour Organization
- Diabetes: Building on Workplace Wellness, Dr. Paul Litchfield, Chief Medical Officer, BT Group
- Strategies for Implementations, Dr. Gayle Crozier-Willi, Public Affairs Manager, Nestlé SA
- Implementing the Strategy in India, Dr. Dorairaj Prabhakaran, Executive Director, Centre for Chronic Disease Control
- Wellness Centres for Health Care Workers and Their Families, Ms. Thabsile D'Lamini, President, Swaziland Nurses Association/Wellness Centre for Healthcare Workers

### *Workshop outcome*

- *Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness*
  - Appendix A: The Scope of the Problem
  - Appendix B: What is Diabetes?
  - Appendix C: Adaptations in Asia
  - Appendix D: Adaptations in Africa



## Acknowledgements

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GSO extends a special thank you to the International Labour Organization for hosting the meeting and to the Forum's guest speakers, including Dr. Tayo Fashoyin, Director, Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Labour Administration Department at the International Labour Organization for his Welcome Speech, to Sylvia Lion, Director Europe Advocacy and Professional Relations Endocrinology for Eli Lilly & Co., for moderating the First Panel Discussion with presentations by Dr. Paul Litchfield, Chief Medical Officer for BT Group, and Dr. Gayle Crozier-Willi, Public Affairs Manager for Nestle SA and to the Second Panel Moderator, Dr. Paul Litchfield, with presentations by Dr. Dorairaj Prabhakaran, Executive Director at the Center for Chronic Disease Control and Ms. Thabsile D'lamini, President, Swaziland Nurses Association/ Wellness Centre for Healthcare Workers.

Special mention should be made to Dr. David Gold, Ms. Meredith Bullamore Hanna and Ms. Karin Holm, consultants to the Programme who moderated the working group sessions and have been instrumental in the preparation of materials relating to the Roundtable Series, the Workshop, the Forum and the **Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness**.