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Context to the nugget

Vinita talks about the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition and how the operative word is "Alliance". She talks about how GAIN works with various stakeholders across the world to deliver outcomes to improve nutrition. She also talks about how Corporate Social Responsibility cannot be treated as a separate function but embed that in whatever the company does.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): What is GAIN? Talk to us a little bit about your role in and how that came about?

Vinita Bali (VB): So GAIN was created in 2001 through the special resolution of UN and that is the time that the GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunization) and GAIN which is the (Global alliance for Improved Nutrition) were created and I think the and I think the insight in both of these creations really was that if the world had to tackle multi-faceted issues like nutrition it needed coalitions which were more than unidimensional so what I mean by that is nutrition is a function of not just the food we eat which again divided into your Micro nutrients and Macro nutrients which are your Vitamins and Minerals but it is also impacted by health and sanitation and hygiene, availability of portable water access to primary health care and things like that and therefor it is a multifaceted problem which required a multidimensionality of solving it and the initial funding really came from the foundations like Gates foundation so today gain has been an existence for 15 years, in fact in December of this year we are going to be celebrating 15 years of GAIN and over these years has worked in understanding and sharpening areas within nutrition so for example one easy to understand its simple intervention in nutrition is fortifying stipples with nutrients, a great example of that is iodine with salt in India if you go overseas milk is invariably fortified with vitamins A and D countries like the US, Latin America etc. decided to fortify sometimes in the 30s and in the 40s and you therefor see a different dimensionality of deficiencies there compared with India, India we are in a fairly great situation where still 42% or children under the age of 5 are malnourished or undernourished, stunted or wasted and we typically tend to say oh he or she is short because in India we don't grow it eat all but actually its wasting and stunting. So that is sort of background to GAIN and GAIN works in over 30 countries right now and the word Alliance in GAIN is very important it perhaps one of the very few if not the only organizations that can talk to industry, development partners, NGOs, private sector to come together to find solutions to the problems of undernutrition and malnutrition to make it very palpable in India GAIN has been involved in work that has happened in Rajasthan on fortification of edible oil with vitamin A and D and the state government of Rajasthan has actually now stipulated that all oil sold in Rajasthan will have to be fortified with vitamin A and D so GAIN works there not just talking about the efficacy of vitamin A and D in edible oil because that has been proven over and over again in many studies that have been done around

the world but also how it would actually be implemented, where do the micro nutrients come from? Where does this thing happen etc. so looking at the entire market place looking at the entire value chain, in Nigeria GAIN is working on how do we address post-harvest loss for something like tomatoes which are the great source of Vitamin A and you too have many kids in Nigeria with poor eyesight and night blindness, which is caused by shortage of vitamin A, GAIN has worked in Afghanistan for example on producing calorie dense and nutrition dense products to get to people or to children, in India actually my first interaction with GAIN was when I was with Britannia and we had worked with GAIN so where I joined Britannia, I realize that Britannia was making product for the world food program which are calorie dense and nutrition dense then I asked myself the question if we are doing this for the world why aren't we doing it for India where we have got such a poor nutritional status. GAIN was coming was opening an office in India I met them and that conversation led to a wonderful collaboration where I think in 2007 or early 2008 we collaborated, it was a wonderful example of public private partnership with the NANDI foundation that was supplying midday meals to 175 thousand children in a school in Hyderabad we collaborated with them GAIN worked with Britannia on product development and we actually created what I think is a unique delivery platform for Iron built from the insight that 70% of school going children are Iron deficient anaemic and we created a biscuit which actually had iron in it, we worked with paediatricians to determine what should be the level of fortification and before we went into the school we do a baseline check of let's say the haemoglobin level of these kids and just to give you an idea typically these are the kids who come to school and we expect them to be attentive and to learn and so on within an average haemoglobin rate of 8 to 8 and a half and the government has a big program called the IFAPILL the compliance rate of which is less than 12% or 10% because it tastes metallic and it makes you feel tortious and you have digestion problems so all we did was we created biscuit as a wonderful carrier of Iron and there's a 100% compliance and so on and we did massive studies and each study proved that if you give this consistently over a period of 90 to a 100 days that level of Haemoglobin goes up to between 11 and a half to 12 and this is work that we collaborated with aims all India institute of science, so it's not as though we were doing this and win that insight we took another big decision we said that we will fortify even the products that we sell commercially but those levels of fortification obviously have to be different and there we went by the WHO code etc. for fortification so 50% of what Britannia even continues to sell now which was the best insight is fortified with vitamins and minerals so I think the big idea that we stumbled upon there was, everybody keeps talking about corporate social responsibility and so on my view on that is very simple you can't do corporate social responsibility outside of your business the best way to be socially responsible is to embed a social cause into the business model itself and that is I think what we did, when we decided to fortify even with the products that we sell commercially.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It was interesting to see Vinita emphasize the word ALLIANCE. Ability to build alliances and partnerships and navigating through complex ecosystems has become such an important leadership trait that is required in several cases where the value chain of delivery to the consumer goes through several systems and one often doesn't have direct control over a lot of them. So, having a systems mindset and building relationships of trust have become a lot more critical today than before in the context of how value chains are evolving.

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End of nugget transcription

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Vinita Bali - Nuggets

- 16.00 Vinita Bali - The Full Conversation
- 16.01 Vinita Bali - About Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
- 16.02 Vinita Bali - Early childhood wiring
- 16.03 Vinita Bali - Navigating the sea of career options
- 16.04 Vinita Bali - Consumer Goods (FMCG) as a career option
- 16.05 Vinita Bali - Transitioning roles in a large MNC
- 16.06 Vinita Bali - Navigating the first 3-6 months
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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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