The WBCSD Pledge for Access to Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene at the Workplace

AN ACTION2020 BUSINESS SOLUTION
BASED ON ...

Action2020 is a business sustainability agenda towards 2020 and beyond, led by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), with water as one of the identified priority areas for urgent action at scale. As a direct contribution to accelerate solutions to the global challenge of access to safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), the WBCSD is calling for the business community to sign and implement the Pledge for Access to Safe WASH at the Workplace.

... a strong business case ...

It is estimated that more than 1.8 billion people are still without access to safe drinking water and more than 4 billion lack access to adequate sanitation. Moreover, it has been shown that the simple act of washing hands with soap can significantly cut the risk of diarrhea by approximately 40 percent.

Many businesses have operations, employees, contractors and customers in countries lacking access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene. Their economic, social and environmental impacts can cause illness or fatalities, impair productivity, and restrict markets for some products and services. There is a compelling and clear economic case for businesses to demonstrate leadership by addressing this situation.

... with straightforward implementation

By signing the Pledge, companies commit to implementing access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene at the workplace at an appropriate level of standard for all employees in all premises under direct control within three years.

Investing in safe WASH for employees leads to:

- **Healthier and more productive workforce:** Adequate access to safe WASH is associated with decreased absenteeism due to water-related diseases, and thus improved productivity.
- **Increased brand value:** Provision of access to safe WASH to all employees can also lead to tangible benefits, such as improved public perception, and thus increased brand value.
- **Lower reputational risks and more secured social license to operate:** Perceived mismanagement of water resources or infringement on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation can negatively impact businesses and possibly result in revoking the company’s social license to operate within certain communities. Good water management and provision of safe WASH allows them to lower this risk.
- **Expanded and more vibrant markets:** Countries with higher percentages of the population with access to safe WASH enjoy higher growth. It is estimated that for every US$ 1 invested in water and sanitation, US$ 4.30 is generated in economic returns through increased productivity.
- **Demonstration of leadership in supporting global objectives:** Ensuring safe WASH at the workplace contributes to the achievement of internationally recognized objectives such as the universal realization of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation.

References:


3 - Fewtrell et al., 2005, quoted at http://globalhandwashing.org/why/ health-impact#sthash.ffkYc3T8.dpuf