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Rubber Estates Nigeria Limited (RENL) operates in rural areas that are remote from the main cities of Nigeria. More than 80% of the company's 3 000 employees live in location of their workplace, with their families, meaning more than 10 000 people in total are being accommodated there. RENL sees the accommodation of the employees and their families as an opportunity to positively impact all aspects of their wellbeing - mental, physical, financial, spiritual, environmental, vocational, etc. Embedding wellbeing in work is seen by the organisation as a strategic priority, with the needs and expectations of their employees and the other interested parties as the main drivers of the strategies and actions implemented.



Feedback

Observed at
Rubber Estates
Nigeria Limited

Employees
3.000

Industry:
Manufacturing

Country/region:
Nigeria

The Need

The business of RENL is driven by people, employees themselves; it is human capital intensive. In their work location, a plantation, the goal of the organisation is to achieve a successful balance between happy employees and high-potential rubber trees. **In their factory, the organisation believes that the productivity and effectiveness of employees can only be achieved if employees' wellbeing is protected;** they can therefore best optimise the capacity of various machines and produce finished products that meet customers' expectations.

The organisation embeds wellbeing in work because they know they cannot achieve anything great and sustainable without employees who are both physically and psychologically well. The goal of their wellbeing strategy is to help facilitate happy, healthy and safe employees.

Implementation

Since 2021, the Managing Director, the Human Resources Manager and other members of the executive team began to embark on tours to all the work sites twice a year, generally in the first and last quarter of each year. **The objective of the tour has been to visit the employees in their various workplaces and homes on the company premises, and have onsite discussions with them, their families and other interested parties.** All matters that are related to their wellbeing in the workplace and residential areas are discussed and physically observed, whenever possible.

The visit also includes trips to the schools, hospitals, power generation facilities, boreholes and all other facilities provided to the employees by the company. **The tour is also extended to the neighbouring communities of the organisation, to ensure that the needs and expectations of these communities is captured effectively by the company's corporate**

social responsibilities. Visiting the surrounding communities is also an opportunity to visit the employees that live outside the company premise (less than 20% of the workforce), and check on their wellbeing as well.

A key aspect of these management tours to the sites is the Townhall meetings that happen during the visits. Townhalls are held with all employees to give them a platform to raise any and all of their concerns, ask questions to management and get feedback. Meetings are also held in the neighbouring communities with the community leaders.

These management tours to the various sites are the backbone of the wellbeing strategy of RENL as it brings top management close to the scene and opens their eyes to what the next steps may be in the journey to better and more holistic wellbeing - of employees, their families and other interested parties. **After the visit, the executive team holds meetings to learn lessons, set priorities, develop action plans and provide resources for implementation.**

Various systems and tools are put in place to plan, do, check and act on the wellbeing of the employees including but not limited to:

- Annual strategic review and budgeting sessions
- A QSE (Quality, Safety and Environment) certification policy, plus various processes and scorecards
- Monthly interactive communication system with employees
- Weekly welfare meetings
- Interactive social media platforms
- An Ethics Committee and whistleblowing system to manage sensitive information affecting wellbeing
- Quarterly meetings with the representatives of the neighbouring communities
- Project meetings and workgroups on various wellbeing topics etc. plus
- Regular/periodic meeting with representatives of the workers

The effectiveness of the embedding wellbeing strategy is continually reviewed and improved based on achievements, regular feedback from employees, and a management style based on active listening. The next management visit is an opportunity to measure the progress made and agree on the next steps.

Of course, the management carries out several operational visit to sites, but this one is particularly special in that it is dedicated to the wellbeing of the employees and their families.

Key wellbeing programmes developed and implemented include:

- **A new employee value proposition (EVP)** which is more flexible and adapted to the context, needs and expectations of the employees. For example, in addition to regularly reviewing the normal employee benefits, they have introduced special allowances and other benefits in the EVP to cushion the impact of high inflation. Generally, several actions were taken to improve the specific aspects of the EVP that matter most to the employees.
- **Accommodation upgrade plans**, with increased resources to invest in the residential areas and maintain them. This plan led to construction of new buildings, massive renovations of existing houses, improvement in the availability of water and electricity, upgrade of internet and GSM accesses, especially in remote areas not well covered by the national networks, etc.
- **A medical improvement plan** aiming at upgrading the capacity of the clinics and sickbays within the organisational premises to treat the majority of the patients on-site and reduce the referrals to hospitals outside their premises and the associated risks. This plan led to recruitment of additional medical doctors and nurses, upgrade of medical equipment, and implementation of EMR software in all their medical facilities, etc.

- **Education improvement plans** with various actions, such as renovations of schools within and outside the organisation's premises, awarding scholarships to the strongest performing children and students from neighbouring communities, upgrading school buses, enhancing equipment at schools, and improving collaboration with the schools' management, etc.
- **Women empowerment and promotion programmes** with priority given to employees' partners for contract positions available on site, plus including partners in the celebration of worker's day and women's day, etc.
- **Programmes to pair their biodiversity policy with the safety of their employees and dependents**, with actions to find environmentally friendly ways to repel reptiles, bats and other animals from the residential areas while protecting them in their natural habitats.

One of the key points in the next phase will be to improve digitalisation of processes and activities related to wellbeing in order to further improve effectiveness and quality. This realisation and consequential action item is one strong benefit gained from the Top Employer Certification process.

Results

To assess the results of the wellbeing embedded in RENL, the organisation used the statement of one of their employees to guide their results, "When the tapper is happy, the tree is happy".

- The "Happy Tapper" results are: the key successes they have achieved in the wellbeing of employees, dependents and all the human lives impacted by this practice.
- The "Happy Tree" results are: the benefits generated from employees' strong performance.

Employee Centric Results (Happy Tapper)

- More than 80% of the key needs and expectations of the employees have been addressed, resulting in a significant drop in employee complaints alongside increased employee productivity.
- Zero work-related accident for 14 consecutive months and overall low frequency and gravity of work-related accidents.
- Appreciation letters and awards received from workers representatives, dependents and neighbouring communities in all locations.
- **Reduction of staff turnover rate by 30% from 2022 to date, despite the increasing inflation and hardship in the country.**
- **Increase of three percentage points (3% more) in employees' promotion rate per year** (11% total) when compared to the previous years on the average since 2021.
- Majority of employees report being happier when compared to before the embedded wellbeing was implemented. A special survey planned in 2025 to give an exact percentage.

Performance and Business Results (Happy Tree)

- **Main strategic and operational achievements have been above target and are breaking all-time records for the company since 2021, compared to several consecutive years of not meeting these targets (from 2014 to 2020).**
- **Financial profits are positive, increasing and above the budget.**
- Reduction in the cost associated with employee wellbeing over the years, as the investments made to improve the wellbeing are paying off, with increased productivity and risks reduction.
- With the proactive wellbeing approach, the managers are less busy addressing foreseeable issues and

emergencies and can dedicate more time to progress and continual improvements.

- Improvement in the company culture and management style in the organisation overall. The values of the company - Responsibility, Ethics and Quality - are better exhibited by everyone in the workplace.

Our View

Here, in a location that otherwise does not have much infrastructure, this organisation has rightly prioritised employees' wellbeing, making sure they have all the necessary support and resources to be well as a community. The nature of the business is such that an organisation needs to embed wellbeing in work, helping employees with all that is needed to be comfortable and safe in their jobs as well as at home. In this case, the scope of the organisation's responsibility is a lot larger than in less remote work environments, and RENL has successfully implemented elements of essential employee wellbeing in their work design, thus resulting in the greater success of their business overall.



Feedback

Thanks for your like!

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