

# Apon Wellbeing

March 2022 - Bangladesh



**Business Network**  
ENGAGE • INSPIRE • INVEST



Apon Wellbeing is an omni-channel marketplace of affordable products and services for industrial workers in Bangladesh. It started its journey in 2017. Part of its business strategy involves offering factory workers access to free health insurance, credit facility and other wellbeing benefits through purchasing groceries from the factory based stores. The core focus for Apon has always been health hygiene and nutrition, but the team was never able to explore the topic of nutrition fully until they joined the SUN Business network. Here you can read a summary of the learnings of Apon Wellbeing, and the changes the company is currently making in terms of nutrition after completing the Nutrition Business Monitor activities.

## Using the Nutrition Business Monitor

The Apon Wellbeing team jointly tested the Nutrition Business monitoring (NBM) tool in September 2021. Feedback provided showed that they found the tool very interesting and helpful. The team felt that completing the tool and receiving recommendations, presented them with an opportunity to sit together and reassess the focus of their current work from a nutritional perspective. In addition, Yasir Arafat shared that the experience helped his team to evaluate the nutritious impact of the products they sell.

Aside from this, Yasir mentioned that he felt that the NBM tool was designed with the intention it would be used by companies operating in the manufacturing sector instead of other sectors-such as the retail sector, which Apon operates in. Yasir suggests that the tool would be more valuable for Apon and other types of SMEs if an adaptable set of questions (that go beyond the manufacturing of nutritious products) tailored to the context of a store based solution are included in the tool.

## Training on applying nutrition focus in your business

The 2-day training was attended by two of Yasir's managers at Apon Wellbeing. Yasir expressed that his managers shared useful marketing strategy examples learned during the training. He mentioned that his managers had multiple great ideas and wanted to begin implementing them as a team almost immediately.

The team at Apon Wellbeing mentioned that the capacity building training would be more beneficial if the content was more relatable and applicable to their business practices and type of service (retail). An example shared was to incorporate recommendations on types of new products that could be offered in stores to meet the nutritional needs of consumers and what guidelines can be used to select products of high quality and nutrition.

### Introducing Mr. Yasir Arafat

Mr. Arafat has been working with Apon since 2019 and is currently the Head of Strategy and Growth. He and his team have completed the tool testing and have participated in the 2-day training. All information in this case study is based on interviews with him, and notes provided by the organisation.

Mr. Arafat has always wanted to do something impactful for the society, so he felt a strong urge to help develop this nutritious model for garment workers.



### Learnings and implementation

The team at Apon Wellbeing expressed that completing the NBM tool and participating in the 2-day training had a positive outcome on their businesses nutrition related practices. Yasir shared that prior to this learning experience, his team based their store selection of food and beverage products and suppliers on which company offered the lowest price over the quality or nutrition of the products. He mentioned that as a result of what they have learned about the importance of nutrition and food safety during the NBM activities, their focus has shifted to selecting suppliers that sell products of higher quality and nutrition content.

The NBM tool has resulted in the team at Apon having a clear vision on changes that could be made internally to achieve a more positive impact on the health of the consumers. The team has adapted their reviewing process of food products from suppliers and they have integrated a new step to check the nutrition quality and licenses of their suppliers. They have started promoting fresh fruits and vegetables in their shops by increasing availability of fresh fruits and by offering small food portions of fresh fruits and vegetables. Furthermore, Apon Wellbeing has started “Women’s corner” and “Nutrition corner” in every shop to encourage positive consumer behavior and has started providing special discounts and other offers only on nutritious products.

### Conclusion

Different members of the Apon Wellbeing team completed the NBM activities which resulted in shared learnings, idea generation and engagement for the whole team. Apon Wellbeings’ focus is on driving positive change on the diets and improving services available to the workforce of the garment workers in Bangladesh. Learnings and support provided from the NBM activities has enabled the team at Apon to improve its services.



#### Looking ahead:

Apon realises that 43% of the garment workers are still malnourished, so 2022 is the year when they want to increase their range of nutritious products from renowned companies, and add more perishable food items like fruits in their stores. Looking ahead, within the next 5 to 10 years, Apon has the vision to own 500 shops and capture the areas where most of the garments factories are located. Apart from providing nutritious food solution, Apon also want to increase their focus on providing health insurances to all workers and launch a savings scheme from the Apon Store by collaborating with more financial services.

