
Civil Society Workshop on Alcohol Control and Industry Tactics in Ghana











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The Vision for Alternative Development (VALD) in collaboration with the IOGT International organized a half day workshop on April 20th, 2017 for a diverse group of civil society organizations aiming to explore the current alcohol situation in Ghana and at the global level, delve into alcohol industry strategies, and to establish the links between alcohol and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The workshop was covered in local press, attracting headlines such as '[VALD Ask Gov't To Regulate Alcohol Use In Ghana](#) [1]' and '[NGO advocates effective alcohol control in Ghana](#) [2]'.

In his welcome address, Mr. Issah Ali (Executive Director of VALD), explained that despite depictions of alcohol use is part of Ghanaian culture, the current consumption trends and inadequate regulation of alcohol advertising is a source of grave concern for public health.

Mr. Labram Musah (the Programmes Director of VALD) went on to provide context and discuss the key Provisions of the Ghana National Alcohol Policy (NAP). He explained that there are currently many scattered laws, regulations, and policies on various aspects of alcohol control. Consequently, he argued for the need to pool all these and other policies into one document, which was accomplished for the Public Health Act of 2012 (Act 851).

He stressed that several legislations are currently in existence, but that they are not comprehensive and enforcement has posed challenges – highlighting the need for a central coordinating body to ensure implementation and enforcement.

Mr. Musah went on to explain how the industry has employed many strategies and tactics in advancing sales, at times by means of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative. The following captions and headings were among those cited as strategies to champion the industry agenda:

- [Empowering the Ghanaian Beverage Industry through Recognition: The Mission Of Ghana Beverage Awards](#) [3]
- [Prez Mahama inaugurates Kasapreko Company's bottling plant](#) [4]
- [Kasapreko supports sanitation campaign - Modern Ghana](#) [5]
- [Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited: responds to water crisis at KATH - NGO water for all Africa](#) [6]

He added that despite this trend, there has also been some level of support for alcohol control and regulations in the same media channels. The following were presented as some positive news in favor of alcohol control and public calls to regulate the alcohol industry:

- [Parliament denounces advertisements on alcohol](#) [7]
- [MP calls for law to regulate alcoholic adverts](#) [8]
- [National policy to regulate alcohol use launched](#) [9]
- [Media tasked to support food and alcohol advertisement laws](#) [10]

Mr. Musah argued that countries have a responsibility for formulating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating public policies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. He urged all those present to call on the government to enact appropriate drink-driving policies; reduce demand through taxation and pricing mechanisms; raise awareness of public health problems caused by harmful use of alcohol; and ensure support for effective alcohol policy formulations.

Kristina Sperkova, President of the IOGT International, followed by explaining that one person dies every ten seconds as a result of alcohol use and abuse and that these harms impact nations economically, socially, and medically.

She stressed that big alcohol retailers, producers, advertising agencies, and others are aggressively marketing their products and offering CSR to increase public acceptance. There is evidence to show that Big Alcohol and Big Tobacco work closely together, share information, share similar concerns, and use similar arguments to defend their products and prevent or delay regulations.

She concluded by saying that, the strongest, most-effective strategies include: restricting the affordability of alcohol, through taxation; restrictions on the physical availability of the alcohol through promoting alcohol free environment especially for children and youth; and alcohol marketing restrictions, e.g. bans on alcohol advertising.

The group resolved to strengthen the Ghana Alcohol Policy Alliance (GhanAPA), submit proposals on the Draft Alcohol Regulations (Legislative Instrument), monitor and report on alcohol industry activities, engage government officials, conduct and compile research for use in advocacy, and raise public awareness.

(launched in March, 2017) and that it is currently involved in the process of developing a Legislative Instrument on Alcohol. It is also a member of the [NCD Alliance Advocacy Institute Seed Programme](#) [11].

Participating organizations included: Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana; Women and Children Health Advocacy Group; Ghana News Agency; Media Alliance in Tobacco Control; Action for Integrated Development; Office of the National Chief Imam; Ghana Muslim Mission; Institute of Leadership and Development; Federation of Youth Club; Hope for Future Generation; Baraka Policy Institute; Community Health Support Team; Christian Council of Ghana; Ghana Organization on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome; Defense Against AIDS, Poverty and Underdevelopment; and the Foundation for Future Christian Workers International.

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- [4] <http://www.graphic.com.gh/business/business-news/prez-mahama-inaugurates-kasapreko-company-s-bottling-plant.html>
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- [7] <http://www.ghananewsagency.org/social/parliament-denounces-advertisements-on-alcohol-115215>
- [8] <http://www.todaygh.com/mp-calls-law-regulate-alcoholic-adverts/>
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