

The **Big Tobacco** ALLIES



How tobacco companies use intermediaries to foster their corporate social responsibility initiatives and promote their image in **Uganda**



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ACRONYMS

ATCA	African Tobacco Control Alliance
BAT	British American Tobacco
BATU	British American Tobacco Uganda
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
COVID 19	Corona virus disease
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
MTC	Meridian Tobacco Company
MTIC	Ministry of Trade Industry and Cooperatives
NCDs	Non Communicable Diseases
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
TCA	Tobacco Control Act 2015
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UHCA	Uganda Health Communication Alliance
URA	Uganda Revenue Authority
UWESO	Uganda Women’s Effort to Save Orphans
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO-FCTC	World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uganda's commitment to tobacco control has been met with resistance from the tobacco industry, where the industry is using front groups and third parties to further their agenda and continuously violate the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO-FCTC) and Uganda's Tobacco Control Act 2015 (TCA).

As a way of reinforcing the Tobacco Control Act 2015 (TCA), the African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA) commissioned a survey on *Monitoring of Tobacco Industry Front Groups and allies* conducted by Uganda Health Communication Alliance (UHCA).

The survey had the following objectives:

- i. To expose tobacco industry intermediaries and mobilise stakeholders to take action against their activities
- ii. To identify the tobacco industry entities that sponsor intermediaries and call for government and public intervention to stop them
- iii. To establish the specific tactics and activities of the tobacco industry allies and make practical recommendations on how to curtail them

Findings from the study revealed a number of front groups and alliances of big tobacco in Uganda. It established sponsorship

of these groups and alliances as well as the activities they operate, in different parts of the country.

The study findings also exposed the huge sums of money the tobacco industry injects through alliances in their activities especially Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It established that tobacco industry sponsorships span over 10 years and the Government of Uganda is one of the beneficiaries of big tobacco philanthropy.

These findings will be important for all stakeholders / sectors concerned with tobacco control to fully comprehend tobacco industry tactics of using third parties to further its intentions. This will help them to come up with better and coordinated efforts to counter tobacco industry interference.

The study recommends that all individuals, associations and agencies in and for tobacco control / public health, should:

- Advocate the full implementation of TCA and tobacco control Regulations especially those directly relating to Article 5.3 of the FCTC
- Prosecute the tobacco industry and front groups particularly public officials who are in breach of the TCA and tobacco control Regulations
- Raise awareness and condemn the evil actions of associating with tobacco industry and its front groups especially in the civil society sector

- Expose and counter the CSR actions and publicity generated through front groups
- Educate the masses especially the youth who are mainly maliciously targeted by tobacco industry about the dangers of tobacco use and promote the incredible benefits of tobacco control

It also recommends having a very clear disclosure and transparency policy that covers broadly all government officials, policy-makers and non-governmental organizations in their interfaces with the tobacco industry in order to protect them from tobacco industry interference.

METHODOLOGY

The study was mainly conducted in Kampala, Uganda. Uganda is a low-income country with a population of 41.6 million people; half of the population is under the age of 15 years. Kampala is the capital and in 2016 the population was recorded as 1.5 million people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, UBOS).

Study Design

A random selection of respondents from various organizations including: ministries, parliament, universities, police force, CSOs, media, tertiary institutions, government agencies, associations/alliances, NGOs, CBOs, health facilities, hotels, private security firms among others was made. No cash incentive was given to the respondents as the survey was voluntary.

Survey Sample

Of 100 people randomly selected, 81 filled in the questionnaires an equivalent of 81% response rate. The selection benchmarked on geographical distribution and knowledge about the TCA. UHCA mapped these organizations with some being actively involved in tobacco control through advocacy, research, health education, awareness raising, school-based preventative health, and community mobilization. Others are involved in child and youth health or public health/Non Communicable Disease (NCD) programs. Concerning knowledge about the tobacco law, the organizations clearly had information regarding the TCA.

Data Collection

Data was collected by data collectors (study assistants) who first underwent training in the data collection protocol. Some respondents were in position of leadership; their roles included Executive Directors, Program Directors, Managers, Founders and Advocacy Officers.

To control for bias, all participants were assured that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality. This would protect respondents as well as give them the confidence required to reduce the bias.

The sample selection was systematic enough implying the findings can be compared to other studies of a similar nature.

It is very critical that all people understand that the tobacco industry is applying numerous strategies to impede effective tobacco control. The tobacco industry therefore cannot and should not be perceived or portrayed as interested and supportive of people's health while it works directly against tobacco control and public health in general. Rather continue to say 'No to Tobacco' and 'Expose Big Tobacco'!

FINDINGS

This section highlights some key findings from the survey, revealing a number of tobacco industry allies, and their established collaboration with the tobacco industry in Uganda.

Evidence from the survey affirms that in Uganda, the tobacco industry has a protracted history of using allies with often ulterior relations to the tobacco industry. The industry has carefully mastered the art of employing these intermediaries, to push its agenda.

The table below highlights the tobacco industry intermediaries identified during the survey and how they served the interest of tobacco multinationals:

Table 1

Name of Ally	Partnering/ Funding tobacco multinational	Activity undertaken
Tomosi Foundation	Alliance One	Leveraged on agricultural services to promote tobacco growing and support / encourage farmers to venture more into growing tobacco Appreciated tobacco farmers in Bunyoro region for their diligence in tobacco growing
Tropical Biology Association, Earth Watch Institute, Fauna and Flora	British American Tobacco	Undertook environmental conservation projects involving tree planting in West Nile region
Musicians / artists, socialites / influencers		Sponsored the display of tobacco products in music videos, films, billboards, social media platforms. This is an indirect marketing strategy for their products

Name of Ally	Partnering/ Funding tobacco multinational	Activity undertaken
Politicians		Claimed tobacco control law is ineffective
West Nile Cooperative Union	Continental Tobacco Uganda Ltd	Supported tobacco farmers to grow tobacco
Tobacco Harm Reduction – Uganda		Advocated for end of cigarette to save smokers’ lives by creating awareness of existing so-called “safer nicotine alternatives” ¹
Straight Talk Foundation	British American Tobacco	Operates the Tree Talk project in Adjumani where over 10 million trees have allegedly been planted

The respondents pointed out critical issues that show planned and consistent tobacco industry interference activities.

1 <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/business/commodities/activists-root-for-oral-nicotine-products-instead-of-tobacco-1915826>

Politicians push tobacco industry agenda claiming tobacco control law is ineffective

The study established that legislators are working with tobacco industry claiming tobacco control law is ineffective. In December 2014, the then Minister of State for Trade Dr. James Mutende was quoted in the media claiming smoking was a personal choice that can't be stopped by laws.² He made this utterance when the tobacco bill in Uganda was being initiated. Such utterances are most likely to be made by someone who has been contacted by the industry.

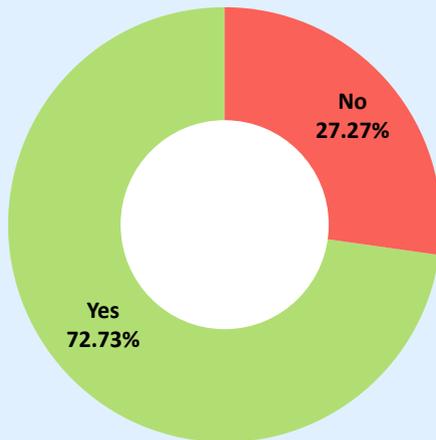


Figure 1: Percentage of those who identified an association, organisation, institution, entity or individual making claims that a tobacco control policy is ineffective

Source: Primary Data, 2020

2 <https://tobaccotactics.org/wiki/uganda-timeline-industry-interference-with-the-uganda-tobacco-control-bill-2014/>

The tobacco industry uses allies to undertake environmental conservation projects

Tropical Biodiversity Association and Earth Watch Institute were noted to have collaborated with British American Tobacco to undertake a project on sustainable forest management in Uganda³. Straight Talk Foundation runs the Tree Talk project in Adjumani where over 10 million trees have allegedly been planted.⁴ BAT is also known to have engaged partnership with Nature Harness Initiatives (NAHI) to help farmers to better monitor and manage the forest and freshwater ecosystems upon which they rely⁵.



14 British American Tobacco Biodiversity Partnership Progress Report

The tobacco industry uses this approach to appear concerned in preserving the environment in spite of the massive environmental degradation including destruction of tree cover and soils as a result of tobacco growing.

3 [http://www.batbiodiversity.org/groupms/sites/BAT_8A7ED8.nsf/vwPage-sWebLive/1F54CC450E52EF88C12577BD003F2BF7/\\$FILE/BAT_Biodiversity_Report.pdf?openelement](http://www.batbiodiversity.org/groupms/sites/BAT_8A7ED8.nsf/vwPage-sWebLive/1F54CC450E52EF88C12577BD003F2BF7/$FILE/BAT_Biodiversity_Report.pdf?openelement) (page 11)

4 <http://www.findglocal.com/UG/Kampala/544167578989347/TREE-TALK>

5 <https://presa.worldagroforestry.org/fertile-ground-for-rewards-for-environmental-services-in-uganda/>

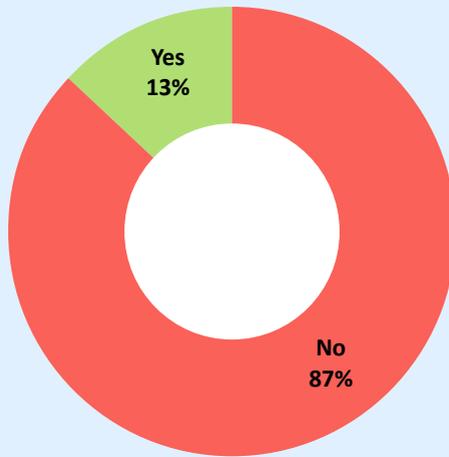


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who identified an association, organisation, institution, entity or individual with signs of an attribution to the tobacco industry, engaging in environmental projects

Source: Primary Data, 2020

The tobacco industry is creating partnerships with NGOs to push their agenda

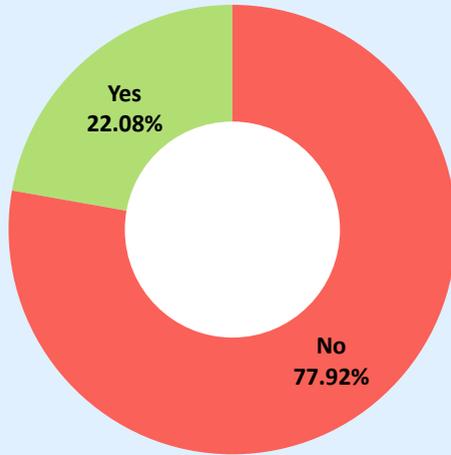
The tobacco industry is creating partnerships and hiding behind corporate social responsibility initiatives through some NGOs to polish its image and promote its products. For instance, Alliance One co-funded Tomosi Foundation a supposedly humanitarian organisation allied to the Tomosi Group where BATU is its client. This attracts much positive media coverage and helps promote BATU. Tomosi Group renders a variety of services including agricultural services where tobacco industry is leveraging on to promote tobacco growing and support / encourage farmers to venture more into growing tobacco. Alliance One, through



*Tomosi Foundation unveiling Alliance One as their top client
Photo Credit: Tomosi Foundation website*

the Tomosi Foundation has also appreciated tobacco farmers in Bunyoro region for their diligence in tobacco growing,⁶ an act that makes it appear concerned about the welfare of the farmers.

⁶ <http://tomosigroup.ug/news/alliance-one-tobacco-uganda-rewards-ho-ima-farmers>



Figures 3: Percentage of respondents who identified any association, organisation, institution or individual partnering with the tobacco industry

Source: Primary Data, 2020

The tobacco industry indirectly advertises tobacco and its products using influencers through music, film, posters/ billboards and social media platforms

The survey revealed that musicians, artists, socialites / influencers and film makers are sponsored to display tobacco products in their music videos, photo-shoots, billboards, concerts, social events and social media platforms. This is an indirect marketing strategy for tobacco products.



Ugandan musicians smoking Photo Credit: Online source

According to the survey tobacco industry is indirectly involved in “ENKUUKA” (an annual music show) where tobacco products are sold and consumed with posters / flyers displayed at the festival and this clearly shows indirect marketing by the TI.

Study findings revealed that tobacco industry is also involved with ‘Swangz Avenue’ (a music production company) to hold a highly appreciated gathering by revelers known as “roast and rhyme” by the lake side. At the event tobacco products are consumed and displayed.



*A group young people smoking shisha at the ‘Enkuuka’ event
Photo credit:
Online source*



A woman smokes shisha at “roast and rhyme” event. Photo credit: Online source

Billboard advertisements



TI uses influential people to advertise their products indirectly. Photo above is a billboard advert with a prominent DJ in Uganda.

DISCUSSION

The threat posed by tobacco industry allies to the advancement of tobacco control in Uganda is evident through the fact that what these allies claim to represent is different from what they really are. Their motives are largely hidden and only advance the interest of tobacco multinationals.

Through their so-called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and other publicity stunts that involve interaction with public officials, they have been able to garner good media reviews and further their inroads into the public space.

Tobacco industry interference can be reduced by having stringent controls on interactions through re-setting rules of engagement, as well as by demanding transparency and disclosure of tobacco industry conduct and finances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As far as effective tobacco control is concerned in Uganda, tobacco industry is not and cannot be a partner. The tobacco industry is undoubtedly working to convince the public to perceive it as a genuine interested party in tobacco control. It makes determined efforts to position itself as a sincere partner especially through CSR. The fact is big tobacco has and will continue to hamper the execution of effective tobacco control, as outlined in the WHO FCTC Article 5.3 and its guidelines. This study affirms that sad point and recommends that all individuals, associations and agencies in and for Tobacco Control/public health, should:

- Advocate for the full implementation of TCA and tobacco control Regulations especially those directly relating to Article 5.3 of the FCTC
- Prosecute the tobacco industry and front groups particularly public officials who are in breach of the TCA and tobacco control Regulations
- Raise awareness and condemn the evil actions of associating with tobacco industry and its Front Groups especially in the civil society sector
- Expose and counter the CSR actions and publicity generated through front groups
- Educate the masses especially the youth who are mainly maliciously targeted by tobacco industry about the dangers of tobacco use and promote the incredible benefits of Tobacco Control

CONCLUSION

Activities of tobacco industry allies have been hampering Uganda's tobacco control measures including implementation of the National Tobacco Control Act 2015. Even with the sustained efforts of tobacco control advocates ensuring that Uganda complies with the guidelines of the WHO-FCTC, no meaningful progress can or will be made if allies of the tobacco industry are allowed to continue their interventions.

This study recommends having a very clear disclosure and transparency policy that covers broadly all government officials, policy-makers and non-governmental organizations in their interfaces with the tobacco industry in order to help them and protect them from tobacco industry and its tactics.

Authorities must be reminded and re-educated about the conflict of interest that interactions with the tobacco industry and its front groups engender, and the fact that their utmost duty is safeguarding public health by ensuring strict adherence to the guidelines pointed out in the WHO-FCTC.

