



Novemer 2019

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF WOMEN AGAINST TOBACCO

## Cancellation of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World meeting

Professor Elif Dagli | Chair Health Institute Association

In the beginning of June 2019, tobacco control advocates, academicians, hospital physicians, tobacco leaf experts, economists, and some civil servants of Turkey, received an invitation to a full-day meeting titled “Istanbul Dialogues” organized by “Sustainability”. The objective of the meeting was to inform the stakeholders about the creation of a **Smoke-Free Index** by the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (FSFW). The index was presented as a tool to transform the industry to eliminate combustible cigarettes and the diseases they cause (1). Against the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), article 5.3., the aim was to get the tobacco control community to meet together with representatives of the industry.

The possibility of FSFW organizing a meeting in Istanbul on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 created a state of emergency in the public health community. The tobacco industry was trying to sit down with civil servants and physicians around a table to discuss the future of their products using intermediaries. It would be openly against FCTC if the industry had invited physicians directly. The innovative strategy of the industry was to put three levels of mediators in between and give the trendy name “Istanbul Dialogues” to the meeting. The invitations were sent out by the “Sustainability Academy” of Turkey on behalf of the parent company “SustainAbility” (<https://sustainability.com>) which was facilitating activities of FSFW that was funded by tobacco industry.

... continued page 3

## Presidents Corner

Marion Hale | President

Hello Again to all our INWAT supporters!

This issue of The NET is a bumper issue themed around *the tobacco industry's innovative strategies to target women and girls.*

I'm sure you will agree that this topic is a hot one in the world of tobacco control. It seems whenever we close an avenue for the tobacco industry to reach customers, they find a way to wriggle around it. ... continued page 3

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We must be ever vigilant to these approaches to ensure we continue to stand in the way of tobacco reaching women and girls across the globe.

Our lead story tells of just such a struggle in Turkey and the ultimate triumph of courageous tobacco control advocates there. Reading this article really gave me confidence in the incredible network of people we have working against the tobacco industry.

You will particularly enjoy the article from Lorraine Craig interviewing our leading female tobacco control heroines...so many wonderful insights and inspiration for future work.

Another great article from the US discusses how non cigarette alternatives are being directly marketed to women. This seems to be a phenomenon we see across the world.

Stories from Jordan, Botswana, Sri Lanka and India connect us with the underhanded tactics happening in those regions. While the way social media is exploited is explained by our contributor from the USA.

After reading all the articles, I have enormous hope that we will ultimately defeat these companies who place financial gains above the lives and health of girls and women.

Finally, INWAT is starting preparations for the 18th World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Dublin in March, 2021. We are represented on the Advisory and Scientific Committees for the Conference. We are also planning pre conference workshops to engage younger female tobacco control leaders to ensure the work of INWAT continues for as long as it is needed. Please get in touch with me at [president@inwat.org](mailto:president@inwat.org) if you would like to contribute or if you know of any inspirational younger women working in tobacco control that we can connect with.

Marion

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## Funding for African Regional Network...Can you help?

After a very successful World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Cape Town 2018, INWAT formed many connections with women working in the African region.

We were lucky enough to recruit two new board members from this region and they have worked hard to plan a regional network.

We want to hold a forum to bring everyone together to plan, consult and offer training to start the network but we have been unable to secure any funds.

We only need around \$45,000 US to make this happen...so if you have any ideas of who we could approach to help us please email me at [marion.jane.hale@gmail.com](mailto:marion.jane.hale@gmail.com) to discuss your idea.

Thanks in advance

## Continued from page 1...

Turkish NGOs shared this information with members of the Framework Convention Alliance and discovered that a similar meeting was planned in Thailand.

There has been accumulating evidence that the tobacco industry was targeting women, especially in communities where women were still not consuming tobacco at the same rate as men. GATS data showed that smoking rates among women increased from 15% in 2012 to 19% in 2016, while smoking rates among men during the same period showed a smaller increase. When both genders live under the same conditions a remarkable increase only in women's smoking rates may be explained by marketing strategies of the industry.

Consensus was reached among the Turkish NGO community to try to stop this organization from holding its meeting and tasks were distributed. Here are some examples of how civil society engaged:

- The Health Institute Association (SED) sent to all sister NGOs 1) recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO), 2) a fact sheet about FSFW and its links with the tobacco industry, and 3) a letter urging their members not to attend the meeting. Another letter was posted to relevant public authorities. The Health Institute Association released a press bulletin which was widely referenced by the press and media.
- The Public Health Specialists' Association made a public declaration against the effort and was involved in extensive media advocacy.
- The Turkish Medical Association released a warning statement to all its branches throughout the country and strongly recommended its 100 thousand members not to participate in the FSFW meeting.
- The Turkish NGO Coalition on Tobacco or Health (SSUK) notified all its member organizations about the negative implications of attending such a meeting.
- The Turkish Thoracic Society Tobacco (TTS) Control Working Group warned its 3000 society members who are respiratory health professionals. TTS informed the media about the FSFW and the risk of manipulation of the Turkish public about so-called safer tobacco and nicotine products. Reaching out to all the invitees and stopping them from attending the meeting meant there would be no participation at the meeting.
- The Turkish partner of "Sustainability" (Surdurulebilirlik Akademisi) had members from various business groups including Turkish Airlines. A social media campaign was carried out informing

members about their connections with Sustainability and FSFW.

- The public authorities, such as the Ministry of Health and the WHO Turkish office, were also notified about the meeting. They acted very efficiently reaching out to the Health Commission and Governorship of Istanbul.
- While these actions were taking place, on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019, an email sent by the managing partner of SustainAbility Rob Cameron, announced that Smoke - Free Index Istanbul Dialogues was cancelled<sup>2</sup>.
- This was achieved by the perseverance of civil society and commitment of the public sector. All of these advocacy efforts had a domino effect that prompted Thailand to cancel a similar meeting that was to be held after the Turkish one.

## References :

### 1 Invitation

Greetings from SustainAbility,

I hope this finds you well. I am writing to invite you to lend your expertise to a multi-stakeholder dialogue on Wednesday, 3rd July 9:00-16:00, in Istanbul, Turkey to inform the creation of the Smoke-Free Index™.

The Index is an initiative of the [Foundation for a Smoke-Free World](#), which seeks to improve global health by ending smoking in this generation.\* It represents a challenging experiment in transforming the tobacco industry by leveraging market drivers and multi-stakeholder pressure – in particular, to eliminate combustible cigarettes and the disease and premature death they cause.

In light of your relevant expertise, we seek your input to inform the development of the Index and highlight demands specific to tobacco control efforts across Europe and Asia.

We know many stakeholders will have strong views on this. Driving change in any industry is challenging; in the tobacco industry, it can only be more so. We do not underestimate the scale of the challenge ahead but do believe that all means – market-based as well as regulatory – are needed to accelerate change and hold the industry to account, especially as new technologies change the sector.

I hope you will attend. You may find additional details and RSVP via [this link](#). Meanwhile, please do not hesitate to contact us should you require more information or wish to discuss this further.

Kind regards,  
Rob Cameron  
Managing Partner, SustainAbility

Please note: the recipients of this email inbox speak predominantly English. We will do our best to reply to requests in Portuguese in a timely manner.

**\*Important Disclosure:** The Foundation for a Smoke-Free World was established with a 12-year pledge from Philip Morris International (PMI). However, its Bylaws and legally binding Pledge Agreement prevent PMI having any control or influence over how the Foundation spends its funds or focuses its activities, and acceptance of this funding does not constitute an endorsement by the Foundation of any of the pledger's products.

### 2 Cancellation

Greetings from SustainAbility,

Thank you for so much your interest in the Smoke - Free Index Dialogues in Istanbul. Please be advised, the Smoke - Free Index Dialogue, which was planned to take place on 03.07.2019, has been canceled.

Thank you again.  
Sincerely,  
Rob Cameron

# Recruiting a new generation of users: The tobacco industry's innovative strategies for targeting women and girls

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In recent years, overall cigarette use in the U.S. among women and men (aged  $\geq 18$  years) has declined from 20.9 percent in 2005 to 14 percent in 2017 – the lowest level in recorded history (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018). Although cigarette use has historically been lower among women compared to men, smoking among women has declined approximately 59 percent, versus 66 percent among men since 1965 (Jamal et al 2016; Wang et al 2018). Additionally, amid declines in smoking in the U.S., non-cigarette product (i.e., e-cigarettes/vape pens, cigars, smokeless tobacco) use is increasing and possibly ushering in a new generation of users. In 2018, approximately 18.8 percent of female high students used e-cigarettes and six percent smoked cigars in the past 30 days (Gentzke et al 2019).

Exposure to tobacco marketing is a risk factor for smoking initiation among adolescents (Spanopoulos et al 2014; Henriksen et al 2010) and increased smoking among adults (Paynter and Edwards 2009; Burton, Clark, and Jackson 2012). Published 50 years after the landmark 1964 Surgeon General's report on the adverse health effects of smoking cigarettes (i.e., lung cancer, heart disease, stroke), the 2014 Surgeon General's report highlights the following: "Smoking prevalence among women...continued to increase across the 1970s as products were aggressively marketed to women." To date, the tobacco industry builds on approximately 100 years of experience of innovative strategies for targeting women and girls in the U.S. (Amos and Haglund 2000). One of the most common strategies has been using themes suggesting that smoking is an aspect of women's liberation. In the early 1920s, American Tobacco Company designed the "Torches of Freedom" [reference to cigarettes] campaign aimed at getting women to smoke as a form of liberation, and as an opportunity to remove the social stigma attached to smoking (Amos and Haglund 2000). Evidence (Amos and Haglund 2000) has shown that cigarette brands (e.g., Lucky Strike, Virginia Slims, Capri) designed to appeal to women and girls have focused on cultural norms and social changes affecting them such as independence, equality, sexual liberation, weight control, style and sophistication, and stress relief.

Moreover, race/ethnicity and gender intersect with tobacco marketing. In particular, tobacco companies have

an extensive history of targeting African American, Latinx, and American Indian women and girls through investments in social, economic, and political institutions and organizations serving these populations (e.g., *Ebony* magazine, League of United Latin American Citizens, American Indian-owned casinos; Robinson et al 1992; ). Additionally, linkages between race/ethnicity, women's liberation, and smoking feature prominently in cigarette advertisements. For example, a January 2000 Virginia Slims "Find Your Voice" advertisement [figure 1] found in *Opera News* magazine features a young African American woman appearing melancholy. The caption reads: "NEVER let the goody two shoes get you down." Similarly, an October 2000 Virginia Slims advertisement [figure 2] found in *Latina* magazine features a young Latinx woman walking along the beach. The caption reads: "Hoy tengo una cita con alguien muy importante. Yo!" [Translated: "Today I have a date with someone very important. Myself!].

In recent years, as non-cigarette products gain popularity, women and girls continue to be a strategically significant market. The internet and social media provide an opportunity for companies to increase the visibility of their products and promote specific brands to women and girls. Internet-based tobacco advertising and branding increasingly feature young women (figure 3). For example, the website homepage of Swisher Sweets, a popular young adult cigar brand, features young urban women exhaling cigar smoke. The caption, "Leave the Rest Behind", implies that cigar smoking is a behavior to which an adventurous young woman should aspire. Cigar smoking is a traditionally male behavior, thus, depicting women on cigar brand websites helps to normalize the association between women and cigars. E-cigarette/vape/vaporizer brands also employ particular features such as size, images, packaging, flavors, and celebrities to attract women and girls. For example, prior to 2017, the social media (i.e., Twitter and Instagram) marketing strategy for JUUL, an e-cigarette that looks like a USB drive, commonly featured images of young women using the device (figure 4). To date, JUUL has 70 percent of the e-cigarette market share. Additionally, the vape pen brand Kandypens recently introduced "Slim Kit Black", which mimics a cigarette shape and size (figure 5) that was originally designed with women in mind. Indeed, cigarette brands designed to appeal to women and girls have explicitly focused on terms such as "slim" (e.g., Virginia Slims).

All of these examples highlight the significance of ongoing monitoring and restrictions on tobacco marketing, as required by the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which granted the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to regulate the manufacture, distribution, sale, labeling, advertising, and promotion of tobacco products to protect public health. Clearly, the tobacco industry's focus on gendered marketing to women and girls continues.

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Figure 1: Image courtesy of [www.trinketsandtrash.org](http://www.trinketsandtrash.org)

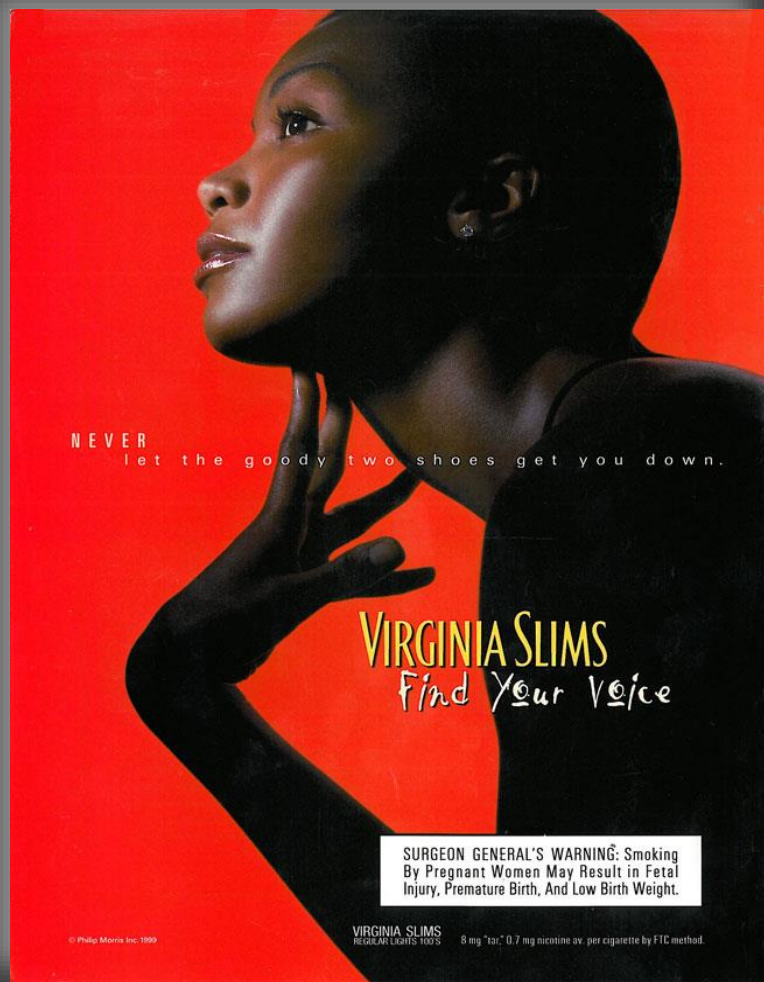


Figure 2: Image courtesy of [www.trinketsandtrash.org](http://www.trinketsandtrash.org)

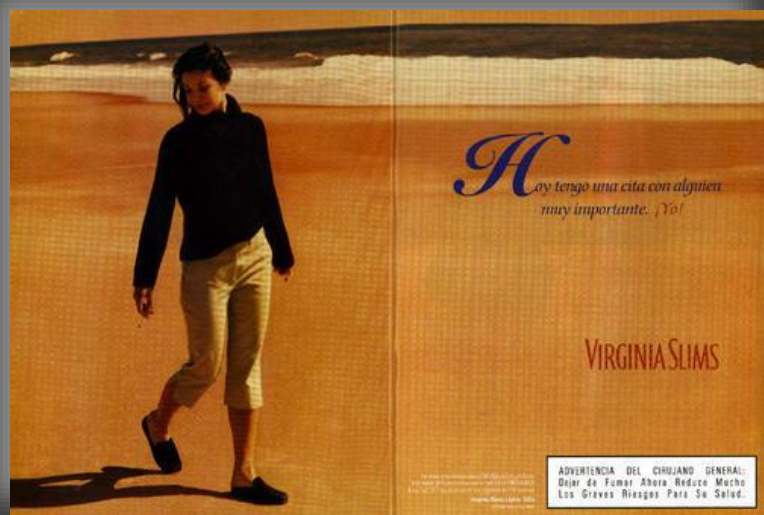


Figure 3: Insert Swisher Sweets homepage



## Tobacco Influencers on Social Media

**Mimi Nichter, Ph.D.** | Professor Emerita, University of Arizona, School of Anthropology, Tucson, Arizona

Although the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) mandates a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship among its signatories, these regulations are being circumvented in countries around the globe. In recent years, the tobacco industry has infiltrated social media platforms to advertise their products, operating in a stealth manner under the radar of the FCTC. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have presented unique opportunities to the industry to reach young people and influence them to smoke. For example, an Instagram post may show a selfie of a young woman smoking, or with a pack of cigarettes clearly visible in her pocket or lying on a table near her, or as in the Instagram post shown below, a young, modern Indonesian woman enjoys a moment by herself in an urban environment smoking her Marlboro Ice Blast cigarette. These casual images are carefully crafted to appear as a part of her normative behavior and everyday life and not like a tobacco advertisement.

In over 40 countries spanning every continent, Phillip Morris International, British American Tobacco, and Japan Tobacco International have identified and hired paid and unpaid young adults with large social media followings as “marketing influencers.” Research conducted by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (2018) and Netnographica, a U.S. based consumer research firm, revealed that influencers receive direct training on which brands to highlight, how to create photos that will look authentic and attractive to youth, and tips for posting to obtain a maximum number of “likes” (Kozinets 2019). Influencer posts contain specific hashtags that reference tobacco-sponsored social events or brands. Over 120 hashtags linked to tobacco industry campaigns were identified by researchers and these had been viewed more than 25 billion times around the globe (Kaplan 2018).

This sophisticated and well-orchestrated global marketing strategy, which has targeted low and middle income countries, has the potential to re-normalize tobacco use among adolescents and young adults—particularly among girls and women. It is well documented that Instagram is one of the fastest growing social media platforms, particularly among females

who share and scroll through posts far more than their male peers (Cortese et al. 2018). Instagram use in low and middle income countries is extremely high; In Brazil, for example, over 70% of youth are on Instagram while in Indonesia, penetration is about 60%. Female influencers who themselves appear real and relatable with a cigarette in hand, have the potential to inspire other young women—under age 18-- to smoke. Rather than overtly trying to sell cigarettes, influencers who represent a range of youth subcultures, have a more intimate relationship with their viewers, subtly showing the utility of smoking in their daily lives and the range of social contexts in which they smoke (i.e., when at parties, when stressed, when hanging out alone). Smoking is portrayed as part of their self-identity and normative gender performance.

Research on the tobacco industry’s use of social media as their latest advertising frontier to exploit, has resulted in a petition to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission calling for an investigation into emerging forms of cigarette advertising. While this is a public domain that is difficult to regulate, it is important for us to be aware of tobacco industry tactics in this arena and to document it around the globe.

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# The Effect of Tobacco Industry Marketing Practices on Smoking and Vaping among Women in Turkey

Gülnaz KARATAY, Professor, Phd | Munzur University, School of Health Science, Tunceli, TURKEY

After the implementation of the "National Tobacco Control Program Action Plan" (law 4207, passed in 2007) in Turkey, the country experienced a decreasing trend in tobacco use (Çalikoglu, Köyceğiz, 2018). But some problems have arisen recently and, according to 2016 data, we now see a rising trend in smoking, especially among young people (Turkish Statistic Institute, 2017). Contributing to this is the relaxation of non-smoking policies, and some ongoing advertising activities.

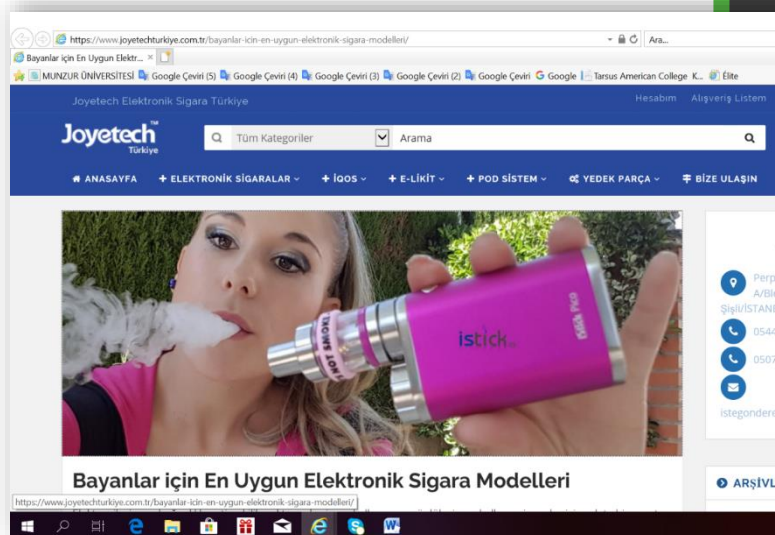
According to Turkish Statistic Institute data, the rate of smoking among women was 13.3% in 2016, which was lower than men's rate of smoking at 40.1% (Turkish Statistic Institute, 2017). Tobacco companies may want to target women for increased advertising because of their lower rate of smoking. Despite the national anti-smoking policy in Turkey, a remarkable increase in smoking among high school and university students has occurred (İlhan et al., 2016) Women are also most affected by secondhand smoke, because nearly half of men smoke and smokefree policies do not cover homes and cars.

The tobacco industry in Turkey is met with traditional societal rules and lack of freedom for women. In its marketing and promotional efforts, the tobacco industry is confronting themes of traditional gender roles (e.g. challenging the conservative norm against women, independence/freedom etc.), and associates smoking with having charm and power. Despite advertising prohibitions, the main male and female characters in movies and series smoke, which may affect young people. According to the results of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey 2017, more than half of teenage girls (13-15 years old) stated that they saw smokers in TV, video and cinema (Turkey Ministry of Health, 2017). In studies in Turkey, curiosity and emulation are among the reasons women report for starting to smoke (Karatay, Gürarlan Baş, 2018). For lower educated women, who smoke more than educated women, (Özurmaz, Yavaş, 2018), feminised slim/super-slim, low tar/ultra-low tar, flavoured cigarettes are preferred. Hand-rolled cigarettes are used among women in the south of the country where tobacco is cultivated. In the eastern border areas,

smuggling of tobacco increases the risk of smoking for women.

Recently there has been a tendency towards electronic cigarette use among women, perhaps because of the perception that they are less harmful. In particular, the lack of restriction in advertising activities related to electronic cigarettes on the Internet may increase the interest of young people in these products. Cigarette companies are trying to break the law related to advertisement by portraying smoking as exercising "freedom of choice" to adults in Turkey. Companies create advertisements about electronic cigarettes using individuals whom they portray as typical consumers. By doing this, they may be trying to change societal norms about using the products. In the electronic cigarette advertisements where the products are presented as revolutionary by cigarette companies, women are presented as attractive and innovative.

The most powerful domestic cigarette company in Turkey is PhilSA (Philip Morris Sabancı Cigarette and Tobacco Inc.). In 2018, PhilSA appointed a woman as its general manager, and touted it as supporting the company's "diversity and participation" vision toward creating a positive perception about its work on improving gender issues. PhilSA sponsors sports, music, fashion and art events under the name of social responsibility projects and thereby stretches advertising and marketing laws. (Calikoglu, Koycegiz, 2018; Keklik, Gültekin Karataş, 2018).



Finally, although anti-smoking policies in Turkey have enjoyed some success, the risk of young girls' nicotine use continues. Ongoing advertising tactics and new products introduced by the companies encourage the inclination to smoke among young women. Gender-sensitive anti-smoking policies in Turkey are, therefore, needed.

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# 18<sup>TH</sup> WORLD CONFERENCE ON TOBACCO OR HEALTH

Join us in Dublin

9-11 March 2021

## The tobacco industry's innovative strategies for targeting women and girls: Insights from four tobacco control leaders

*The International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITC Project) Dissemination team at the University of Waterloo (Dr. Janet Chung-Hall, Dr. Genevieve Sansone, and Lorraine Craig, under the direction of Principal Investigator Dr. Geoffrey T. Fong) completed a research project for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation examining the impact of tobacco control policies on women and children.*

*For one study in the overall project, results from interviews with four tobacco control leaders—Dr. Judith Mackay, Dr. Mira Aghi, Farida Akhter, and Cristina Perez—described aggressive tobacco industry marketing tactics targeting women and young girls in Asia, India, Bangladesh, and Brazil, and critical gaps in current policies to curb deceitful industry practices.*

Dr. Aghi described the tobacco industry as “the best behavioral scientists...they meticulously look at what things are going to motivate women to use tobacco and then provide enabling environments to help them to pick it up.”

*Several industry tactics targeting women and girls were revealed during the interviews:*

- Virginia Slims and other campaigns targeting Asian women; pink cigarette packaging in Japan; slim pearly cigarettes, and cigarette giveaways
- Slim packs and lipstick size packs which have been shown to be perceived as more attractive and less harmful than standard-size packs among Brazilian women
- Relentless tobacco industry lobbying in Brazil from tobacco industry associations, tobacco producers, local municipal parliamentarians where tobacco is grown, and media/journalists of tobacco growing regions that stall the implementation of key policies
- Cigarette promotion targeting female students attending private universities in Bangladesh
- The use of attractive feminine names for smokeless tobacco (zarda and gul) in Bangladesh, such as Shahzadi (Princess), Shobha (beautiful), shurovhi (fragrance, sweet smell) to attract women to the products
- The manufacture of reusable zarda packs to encourage women to purchase them once and refill them with small (and affordable) amounts of zarda, betel leaves, areca nut and lime. The zarda packs are decorated in a

very attractive way and those who buy small amounts are offered a combination of zardas

- Natural and artificial flavors and perfumes are added to smokeless tobacco, as well as spices, molasses, cinnamon, menthol and other plant materials such as papaya, herbs, and saffron to increase product attractiveness. The ingredients are listed on zarda packs in very small print so that they are rarely noticed by users, many whom have low literacy

*Dr. Mackay, Dr. Aghi, Ms. Akhter, and Ms. Perez identified several directions to make progress in curbing tobacco industry tactics targeting women and girls:*

- Increase the involvement of women in leadership positions in tobacco control policy development and implementation
- Track tobacco industry activities (e.g. STOP project <https://www.bath.ac.uk/projects/stopping-tobacco-organisations-and-products-stop/>) aimed at stopping the targeting of women through marketing, promotion, and sponsorship. For example, industry efforts to infiltrate and influence women's groups
- Increase the profile and prominence of discussions about gender in high-level meetings such as the WHO FCTC Conference of the Parties
- Implement and enforce strong smokeless tobacco control strategies in India and Bangladesh focusing on regulation of the production (including prohibiting additives used to increase attractiveness and requiring health warnings on standardized packaging), supply, and sale of smokeless tobacco, in combination with campaigns to increase awareness of the harms of smokeless tobacco
- Swift implementation of a ban on the display of cigarettes at point of sale, the menthol ban, a ban on flavor descriptors, and the implementation of plain and standardized packaging in Brazil
- Fully implement WHO FCTC Article 5.3, in order to reduce the continued threat of tobacco industry marketing and interference with policymaking.

These interviews were one component of the overall research project examining the impact of tobacco control policies on women and children. The full report on the interviews entitled “*Perspectives from Interviews with Tobacco Control Advocates in Asia, India, Bangladesh, and Brazil on Challenges and Opportunities in Tobacco Control for Women and Children*” can be downloaded from the ITC Project website at <https://itcproject.org/resources/view/2584> (see Appendix O). The link also points to literature reviews on the impact of tobacco control policies on women and children and 19 new analyses of ITC data on the impact of health warnings, smoke-free, and tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship on males and females.

# Novel Tobacco Marketing Strategies Targeting LGBT Women

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The tobacco industry targeting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community is not news. Historically, industry titans like Philip Morris have bought their way into roles as community influencers by funding AIDS research<sup>1</sup> or through targeted marketing campaigns like R.J. Reynolds' "Project Scum"<sup>2</sup> that used community venues, publications, or pride events for advertising. However, novel and quickly evolving technologies have required newer marketing strategies that are concerning for lesbian and bisexual girls, since they smoke at rates much higher than heterosexual girls<sup>3</sup> and begin smoking at younger ages.<sup>4</sup>

Emerging research is investigating tobacco marketing exposures among LGBT women. A recent study by Emory and colleagues found that LGBT smokers, women and men, were more likely to encounter tobacco product coupons or e-cigarette advertisements than heterosexual smokers.<sup>5</sup> Social media appears to play a significant role in modern tobacco industry marketing, as LGBT smokers were much more likely than heterosexuals to encounter these ads on Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, or video streaming websites.<sup>6</sup>

As of 2019, U.S. women use social media at higher rates than men (78% vs. 65%, respectively).<sup>7</sup> When these rates are examined in conjunction with LGBT social media use (which is much higher than heterosexual people's use),<sup>8</sup> a distressing picture is painted of LGBT women's vulnerability to modern tobacco industry marketing techniques. Indeed, recent estimates show that 37.2% of lesbian and bisexual girls are exposed to online tobacco marketing compared to 22.9% of heterosexual girls in the United States.<sup>9</sup> Though more research is needed in order to understand the efficacy of these social media marketing approaches among LGBT women, it is evident that prevention efforts are needed to counter these newer modes of tobacco advertising. For instance, social media campaigns used in conjunction with "social branding"<sup>10</sup> methods of tying LGBT identity to smoke-free lifestyles could be effective in reducing tobacco use and acceptability among LGBT women.

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## How Young Girls Have Become a target for the Tobacco Industry in Botswana

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Bans on tobacco advertising, as outlined in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), could help stop the increase in tobacco use among adolescents, particularly girls. Early studies associated tobacco advertising campaigns targeting women with major increases in smoking uptake among females younger than the legal age for purchasing tobacco products (Pierce et al., 1994). A recent study undertaken in Botswana has shown that girls are more vulnerable to media advertisements than boys (Mbongwe et al., 2017). Botswana is a Party to the FCTC and Parties to the FCTC are encouraged to enact laws that have comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising and promotion (TAPS). However, point of sale advertising and indirect advertising in the form of attractive packaging of cigarettes meant to appeal to young girls such as “slim cigarettes” remain a challenge. As of 2012, the slim cigarette market share in Botswana was 1.2%, which is above some developed countries such as the UK (Slater, 2016).

A recent study in Botswana revealed a higher proportion of girl current smokers (4.5%) as compared to boys (3.5%) aged 12 years (Mbongwe et al., 2017). Even though the difference was not statistically significant, this is a cause for concern. The magnitude of the problem is likely to be increasing since the proportion of students aged 13–15 years who have tried smoking has steadily increased from 13.1% in 2002 (Mbongwe, 2002) to 17% in 2008 and 29% in 2017 (Mbongwe et al., 2017). Additionally, a significant number of 12 year-old adolescents attending primary schools are already current smokers (Mbongwe et al., 2017). Contrary to prior reports from the region, males and females show similar prevalence of smoking, suggesting that girls in Botswana might be more vulnerable compared to those from other countries who do not have equal rates of smoking as boys (Majelantle et al., 2014, Mbongwe, 2012). This could be explained by the recent research findings by Mbongwe and colleagues (2017) showing girls being more responsive to media advertisements on tobacco than boys (Mbongwe et al., 2017).

Pictures 1 and 2 show some of the tobacco marketing strategies for young girls and boys in primary schools in Botswana.

Targeted health promotion messages are needed for young girls and women to resist tobacco advertising and promotion. Additionally, Botswana urgently needs to adopt legislation that will restrict point of sale advertising and the banning of promotional materials targeting school children

Pic 1 Small packs given to children by street vendors when a child buys a single cigarette provided with matchsticks.



Picture 2 Candy cigarettes sold near schools



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## Women and Tobacco in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka, a small island nation in South Asia, hosts a population of 20.2 million people. Influenced by Buddhism that teaches respect to all living beings and an Asian culture that values motherhood, the country has always placed women in a powerful social position. The country's free health and education systems, together with the aforementioned value system, allow women to be educated with enrolment rates similar to men for schools, and higher than men for universities. Sri Lankan women have a higher life expectancy than their regional neighbours. The country produced the first female Prime Minister in the world in the early 1970's and a female President two decades later.

Tobacco was introduced to Sri Lanka during the Portuguese invasion. Supported by the colonial government, British American Tobacco (BAT) initiated the cigarette trade in the early 1900's. BAT still holds the largest stake in the trade, owning 84% of Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC); the monopoly holder for manufacturing and selling cigarettes in Sri Lanka.<sup>1,2</sup> In the past decade, tobacco smoking among men has reduced from around 40% to 22%, and is going out-of-fashion as has other forms of tobacco use (betel quid with tobacco and beedi). However, one in five men still smoke tobacco in Sri Lanka.

Comparatively, the smoking rate among women has never surpassed the 1% mark.<sup>3,4,5</sup> This is despite a range of tactics used by the industry on Sri Lankan women to get them addicted to its product such as targeted advertisements, product placements, free distribution at social events with young women, employing female models to smoke near female schools, introducing brands "for women", and targeted promotion campaigns through social media.<sup>6,7,8</sup> Resistance to these pressures and influences is due mainly to the country's bottom-up tobacco control campaigns that have constantly engaged women at the grass root level, improving their resilience. This is backed by a Buddhist Asian culture and a value system that motivates resistance to overindulgence, and encourages a leadership role at the household level managing limited resources for the betterment of the family.<sup>9</sup>

The targeting of Sri Lankan women by the tobacco industry was not only related to increasing its user base. When the country's first (and only) female President established a "Presidential Task Force" (PTF) to strengthen tobacco, alcohol, and illicit substance control in Sri Lanka, she was constantly targeted by the tobacco industry via different tactics. Image 1 is an excerpt from a BAT internal document, in which a local CTC Director explains to the BAT patrons how rigorous the intervention was because the CTC was not able to prevent a comprehensive ban on advertisements and promotions that was implemented in 1999.<sup>10</sup>

At the community level, empowered girls and women are in a continuous battle with the industry's interference, not only to safeguard themselves from its addictive product, but also to safeguard the country's policies from the Industry's negative influence (Image 2). At the grass roots level, community groups working to control tobacco are mainly led by women.<sup>9</sup> When the industry legally challenged the implementation of pictorial health warnings in 2014, the majority of protestors on the streets were women. Thus, Sri Lankan women are a major and a powerful stakeholder group in tobacco control in Sri Lanka, not only resisting to fall for tobacco industry tactics to get them to be users of its products, but also intervening in the industry's interference in their country's public health.

Image 1: An excerpt from a British American Tobacco internal document explaining the attempted interference aimed at the Sri Lankan President related to the advertisement ban in 1999.

**BACKGROUND**

(a) In 1997 a Presidential Task Force on Alcohol Tobacco & Illicit Drugs (PTF) was appointed to formulate a national policy on alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs.

The PTF presented its report in March 1998. This report was formulated without any consultation with CTC or the soft and hard liquor manufacturers in this country. Consequent to the PTF report, a presentation was made to Cabinet, which in principle agreed with the recommendations and led to the formulation of the 1<sup>st</sup> draft bill.

In the preliminary stages the Company wrote to H.E the President, met with her and lodged strong protests on the basis that the Company's views were not consulted and therefore, the report was considered biased.

In July 1998 the MD/CEO together with Legal & Corporate Affairs Director met with H.E and lodged our protest on the same basis as aforesaid. She undertook to hear our representations before finalising any proposed enactment.

Consequent to our representations there was a lull until 31<sup>st</sup> May 1999 when H.E was awarded the WHO Tobacco Free Initiative award for action taken by her government. This led to formulation of a 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of the bill. Once we were aware of the formulation of a 2<sup>nd</sup> draft bill, the Deputy MD & a Non Executive Director (who is the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce), and the Legal & Corporate Affairs Director met with H.E on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1999. At that meeting she agreed to send the draft bill for our observations. On receipt of the draft bill, we formulated our observations in liaison with BAT Lawyers and the Legal Department at the Centre. Suffice it to state that all parties thought the proposed legislation was most draconian. H.E also assured us that once our observations on the bill were formulated, she would summon a meeting to hear the concerns expressed by the Company.

Despite her assurance, the bill was gazetted on 10<sup>th</sup> September 1999 and sent to Parliament on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1999. On hearing this we faxed H.E and the draft bill was not placed on the order paper of Parliament.

Image 2: A photograph of two school girls in a rural area with a public petition they developed pleading their community to make their village smoke-free



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## Female Youth in Jordan Targeted Exposure to Tobacco Products

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Cigarettes and tobacco products are addictive. Early symptoms of addiction are observed in youth even while smoking intermittently and before starting daily smoking.<sup>1</sup> A prospective study of 1,781 youth in Jordan demonstrated that 29.8% of all 10<sup>th</sup> grade students (37.2% of boys and 23.7% of girls) were smokers<sup>2</sup> Cigarette smoking in Jordan is higher among male youth compared to female youth. However, female youth are more likely than male youth to begin waterpipe tobacco smoking, making it a serious public health concern.

Easy access and availability of tobacco products is one of the main reasons for youth tobacco use. In Jordan, 52.9% of youth obtained cigarettes by buying them from a store or a street vendor. About 67.4% of smokers were not prevented from buying them because of their age.<sup>3</sup> Jordan needs to be more proactive in restricting youth access to tobacco.

One of the venues for youth socialization is going to cafes and restaurants. There are numerous restaurants in Jordan that serve Waterpipes (shisha/hookah) to those under 18. The spread of a smoking culture in Jordan, including the availability of waterpipes to those under the age of 18 has led to an increase in female waterpipe smoking. Sales promotions saying “girls smoke hookahs for free” have been offered to attract them to events and have been controversial (See Figure 1).

Various types of tobacco company marketing influence youth to start using tobacco. In fact, the most heavily advertised tobacco brands were the preferred brands of cigarettes smoked by school-age students in 2016.<sup>4</sup> In Jordan, more than 6.8% of girls were offered a free tobacco product from a tobacco company. Furthermore, 9.5% of the girls owned something with a tobacco brand logo on it.<sup>3</sup>

As youth move into adulthood, continuing to smoke will have significant impact on their quality of life. Advertising plays an important role in youth smoking initiation. Some forms of promotion, such as retailer promotions and tobacco sponsorship are not restricted in Jordan. This requires the immediate attention of policy makers, especially for prevention of smoking among girls.

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Figure 1. Free Hookah Smoking For Girls On Tuesdays Advertisement



## Rise of electronic cigarettes and other new technologies in India and the policy response in India – a model for developing countries

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Electronic cigarettes and other new technologies are promoted as safe alternatives to conventional cigarettes. Their exponential growth in developing countries like India and increasing popularity among current (daily and recreational) and adolescent never-smokers has been a concern for public health experts. The concern has been even bigger for young girls/women because their needs are not addressed in current quitting guidelines. Additionally, there are no current estimates of how many people in India vape nor how many women or underage users exist in India.

The first national consultation on Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) in India was held in May 2013. The consultation concluded that the risks of introducing ENDS far outweighed the benefits. Existing policies (chiefly the Poisons Act and Drugs & Cosmetics Act, which have strict regulations on trade, storage and use of nicotine) convinced the state governments of Chandigarh and Punjab to ban the trade, sale and use of ENDS. These bans were contested in courts but dismissed. During 2013-2019, 14 other states in India issued comprehensive policies to ban the sale and trade of ENDS.

Between September 2016 and May 2019 several front groups of tobacco industry began to pressure India's

Ministry of Health to regulate rather than ban ENDS. In August 2018, after deliberations with national experts, the Ministry issued an advisory to all states urging them to ban ENDS. The rationale for the Government of India has been to uphold the first principle of health professionals ('First, do no harm'). Additionally, the Ministry found no conclusive population-based evidence of harm reduction or cessation benefits from the new technologies. Recent results from the Global Adult Tobacco Survey found that current hardcore cigarette smoking (defined in India as one who smokes more than the mean number of cigarettes, has been smoking more than 10 years, and has made no quit attempt in the last year) describes only 0.002% of all tobacco users in India. The Ministry concluded that introducing a product just for this population would be too risky, given that this population does not access existing cessation services anyway. More importantly the Ministry perceived that an introduction of any new tobacco or tobacco-related product would confound existing enforcement and policy implementation efforts. Additionally, an examination of social media from the past three years found dedicated vaping groups for young women vapers (e.g. vaping ivy and vagegirls) which promote ENDS and aim to attract users. By August 2019, there was unanimous consensus among national health experts, the Ministry and all state health departments to recommend a ban on ENDS.

India's position is an example for South Asia countries that have low prevalence of hardcore smokers; are mired in challenges of regulating diverse tobacco products; and have limited human and financial resources. Such countries must consider a ban on ENDS, unless independent, population-based and globally-validated evidence of benefit from cessation using ENDS emerges. India's Ministry of Health's firm position on ENDS at FCTC COP-8 is commendable and it remains undeterred despite multiple legal challenges and lobbying efforts by the tobacco industry and its front groups.



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