



CTPD'S MONDAY OPINION

This is a weekly column aimed at sharing CTPD's perspective and steering public debate on various issues pertaining to Trade & Investments Law, Public Finance Management, Extractives and Human Development.

TODAYS TOPIC

THE CASE OF TOBACCO USE IN ZAMBIA: *Why Zambia Needs to Pass a Tobacco Control Law*



Ms. Luyando Muloshi
Legal Researcher- CTPD

DESPITE the widely known health risks associated with tobacco consumption, the use of tobacco continues to increase in Zambia. By 2025, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that there will be 300,000 new smokers in the country. In this week's Monday Opinion, we argue that Zambia needs to pass a tobacco control law to offset this devastating epidemic which is increasingly becoming a top public health threat. We will also highlight the current state of tobacco use in Zambia, and the potential benefits of a comprehensive tobacco control law. It is time for Zambia to take action on tobacco control and prioritize the health and well-being of its citizens.

Approximately 16% of Zambians aged 15 and above use tobacco, according to the Ministry of Health. This puts 1.6 million people at risk of various tobacco-related diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory illnesses. In 2019, tobacco caused more than 7,100 deaths in Zambia, representing 6% of all deaths in the country, or about 140 lives lost per week. **Second-hand smoke exposure is responsible for about 800 deaths each year.** These deaths, along with healthcare costs and lost productivity, are estimated to cost the Zambian economy **ZMW 2.8 billion** annually, equivalent to **1.2%** of the country's GDP.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that the current trend of tobacco use, both in Zambia and globally, is not compatible with sustainable development. To address this issue, the Agenda as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 3.4, sets a target of reducing premature mortality from

non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by one-third by 2030. Achieving progress in NCDs requires the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), as stated in SDG Target 3.a. Although Zambia ratified the WHO FCTC in May 2008, it has neither domesticated the treaty nor adopted many of the policies designed to reduce tobacco use, which are mandatory under the treaty, as of 2023.

With a draft of the Tobacco Control Bill being reviewed by line ministries, Zambia has an historic opportunity to lower the health and economic losses attributable to tobacco. By adopting the Bill, Zambia can strengthen its implementation of FCTC demand-reduction policy measures (SDG Target 3.a). The bill, if enacted, would achieve in part the following:

(i) To protect people from second-hand smoke, banning smoking in all public places is necessary as per WHO's conclusion. Though Zambia has already legislated a ban on smoking in public places, its enforcement remains weak. It is essential to enact the Tobacco Control Bill to extend the existing law to include all public places and strengthen enforcement to ensure compliance.

(ii) Comprehensively ban advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products. Advertising, promotion, and sponsorship is loosely regulated in Zambia. The 1992 Public Health Regulations permit tobacco adverts on all forms of media and many forms of promotion and sponsorship are allowed as long as there is disclaimer reading "smoking is harmful to health". However, a comprehensive ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship is necessary to reduce tobacco consumption and to protect vulnerable populations such as children and adolescents who may be more susceptible to the influence of advertising and promotion.

(iii) To increase awareness of the health risks associated with tobacco, graphic

warning labels covering 65% of tobacco packaging should be required in Zambia. While text warnings are mandatory on the front and back of tobacco packages, they are less effective than graphic warning labels. These labels educate consumers about the risks of tobacco use and counter the misleading marketing practices of the tobacco industry. Implementing graphic warnings is a cost-effective and straightforward measure to control tobacco consumption.

(iv) Increase tobacco taxation. Price and tax measures are an effective and important means of reducing tobacco consumption particularly among young persons by reducing the affordability of tobacco products, while also increasing government revenue. The tax increases need to be high enough to push prices up above income growth and inflation. According to WHO, an increase of tobacco prices by 10% decreases tobacco consumption by about 4% in high-income countries and about 5% in low- and middle-income countries.

(v) Impose measures that reduce trade in illicit tobacco. Illicit tobacco trade undermines public health efforts to reduce tobacco consumption because such products are often cheaper and more readily available than legal tobacco products, which increases their accessibility and affordability, particularly among vulnerable populations such youth and low-income groups. This consequently leads to increased tobacco use and associated health risks, as well as reduced tax revenues for the government.

About the Author:

Luyando Muloshi is an advocate for the High Court of Zambia. She holds a Masters and Bachelors Degree in Law from the University of Zambia and is a Legal researcher at the Centre for Trade Policy and Development.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 50882, Lusaka, Zambia
Plot 3823, Manda Hill Road,
Olympia Park
Tel: +260 211 264409
Email: Info@ctpd.org.zm



Centre for Trade Policy & Development



@CTPDZambia



www.ctpd.org.zm



+260975876038