



Jamaica Coalition for Tobacco Control

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24 September 2015

The Editor
Daily Observer
40-42 ½ Beechwood Avenue
Kingston 5

Dear Sir:

Re: Corporate Social Responsibility or Product Promotion?

We have taken note of a recent article in the Daily Observer where a tobacco company is lamenting that pending tobacco legislation curtailing tobacco advertising promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) could stop it from offering scholarships to students.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be broadly defined as a belief that a company should take into account the social, ethical, and environmental effects of its activities on its staff and the community around it. However, when it comes to the tobacco industry CSR takes on a different meaning. The tobacco industry has used CSR tactics to improve its corporate image with the public, press, and regulators.

These CSR efforts by the tobacco industry can mask but not negate the fact that their products are lethal when used as directed and no amount of CSR can diminish the fact that the profits from tobacco sales can never equate to the costs of health harms by tobacco use.

Tobacco use is not only a health issue it is also a developmental issue which has the potential to impact the economy and the labour force as well as social and legal systems. More than half of smokers die from their tobacco use – many of these deaths occur in their economically productive years and in developing countries like Jamaica

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is the world's first public health treaty and its articles are geared towards activities that reduce tobacco use and prevent others from starting to smoke. Jamaica has a legal obligation under the FCTC to enact the Articles which are in the interest of the health and development of the Jamaican people

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Member Organizations:

Association of General Practitioners of Jamaica • Caribbean College of Family Physicians, Jamaica Chapter
Caribbean Public Health Association • Diabetes Association of Jamaica • Jamaica Cancer Society • Jamaica Dental Association
Nurses Association of Jamaica • The Heart Foundation of Jamaica • The Medical Association of Jamaica

Article 13 of the Convention states that tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) increase tobacco use and that a comprehensive ban on TAPS decrease tobacco use. To be effective, a comprehensive ban should address all persons or entities involved in the production, placement and/or dissemination of TAPS.

Many countries who have implemented Article 13 have restricted tobacco companies from offering scholarships. This is one of the tobacco companies more popular CSR activities.

The tobacco industry has long recognized the benefits of ramping up advertising and other strategies that ensure that smokers who die (often prematurely) are continuously replaced by new smokers – this is why they target vulnerable groups such as youth and women.

The Government of Jamaica through the Ministry of Health has started the ball rolling with the Public Health Regulation on tobacco control which covers key Articles of the FCTC.

We call on the Government to implement comprehensive tobacco legislation which will curtail tobacco advertising promotion and sponsorship and help to reduce tobacco consumption. This is critical if we are to contribute to the overall targets set by the World Health Organisation of a 25 percent reduction in premature mortality from non-communicable disease by 2025, and also a relative reduction of 30% in tobacco use by that year.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Knox Hagley', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Prof. Knox Hagley, CD, DSc (Hon), FRCP, FRCPE, FACP, FACC, FFPH
Chairman