

The Tobacco Control Chronicle

Your quarterly catch up on CTCA's tobacco control news

IN THIS EDITION:

- Social media influencers and teens smoking
- Smoke free schools in Burundi
- Illicit trade in Uganda
- ENNDS in Kenya
- MPOWER in West Africa
- TII in Zambia



Profiling the six CTCA tobacco control research grantees for 2024

The six successful researchers who were each granted USD5000 to investigate issues related to tobacco control on the continent have been announced. They are:

- Jeya Sushimitha from Uganda
- Roger Ciza from Burundi
- Hafsa Lukwata Sentongo from Uganda
- Mary Nyangi from Kenya
- Kokou Agbeko Jean Paul Fantognon from Togo
- Charity Syatalimi from Zambia.

In this quarter's edition of the CTCA newsletter we profile these researchers and the work that they will be working on for the next year.

The CTCA had advertised the call for research proposals on 22nd May 2024. Close to 90 tobacco control researchers applied for the CTCA's grant to conduct the TC research on the continent. The aim of the call was to seek for researchers to delve into issues of tobacco control. Their research all aligns with the CTCA Tobacco Control

Research (TCRA) Agenda. The aim of the agenda is to generate local evidence to drive tobacco control policy formulation and implementation in Africa. Of the eight thematic areas in the research agenda, the most popular were tobacco use and populations at risk as well as the effect that tobacco use has on sustainable development.

This newsletter is brought to you by



Do social media influencers in Kampala, Nairobi and Lagos encourage Africa's young people to smoke with their posts?



Whether its Instagram, Tik Tok, WhatsApp or X, social media has become a critical part of most young people's daily must do activities.

What this means is that influencers have the ability to shape perceptions, trends, and behaviour of young people.

And encouraging smoking is one such potential that they can have.

In this study Dr Jeya Sushimitha wants to understand just how much sway these social media influencers have with young people – can their posts encourage them to smoke?

Ugandan based Sushimitha is a Medical Humanitarian Worker with APAR Foundation, Medical Doctor, Clinical

Research Assistant at Makerere University-Johns Hopkins University.

While traditional tobacco control measures target marketing restrictions, the digital landscape presents new challenges that are inadequately addressed within current policies.

This study will assess the prevalence of tobacco use among young people and analyse the reach and nature of pro-tobacco content from influencers. She will investigate the relationship between influencer exposure and tobacco use behaviors, and understand youth perceptions of influencers' impact on their tobacco-related decisions and attitudes.

It will include an online survey of just over 1200

young people as well as a focus group discussion with 60 young people. In addition, it will also analyse the content of 30 influencers on the continent

"This study is significant as it addresses a key gap in understanding the role of digital influencers on youth health behaviors within the African context, aiming to inform evidence-based digital tobacco control policies and targeted counter-messaging strategies," she notes in her abstract.



What's driving or stopping hospitals and schools in Burundi from making public smoke-free areas



Smoke-free environments in public spaces have been mooted as an ideal intervention to reduce the growing burden of tobacco-related diseases. But in hospitals and schools in Bujumbura in Burundi, these are not being implemented effectively. Part of what Dr Roger Ciza wants to address through his study is understanding This study aims to assess the acceptability and explore the drivers, facilitators, and inhibitors of the effective implementation of smoke-free areas in health institutions and schools in Bujumbura, Burundi. Dr Ciza is the Executive Director of The Health Healing Network Burundi and a Lecturer at the

National Institute of Public Health. He is dedicated to health research and system strengthening. For his study he will interview students, teachers at schools and healthcare workers, patients and administrators at hospitals to understand their perceptions and experiences with smoke free policies. "The findings will provide insights into the factors that influence the acceptability of smoke free environments in schools and healthcare facilities, including cultural attitudes, policy enforcement challenges, and institutional readiness," he notes in his abstract. By identifying the barriers and facilitators to implementation, this study

will inform public health interventions aimed at promoting healthier environments through effective smoke-free policies. The results could be instrumental in developing targeted strategies to improve adherence to smoke-free regulations and protect vulnerable populations from the harms of tobacco smoke, contributing to broader public health efforts in Burundi.



Illicit trade of tobacco products in a small Ugandan border town - how it happens

Illicit trade poses significant challenges to public health and economic stability. In border regions it's a particularly big problem due to the fact that there are regulatory discrepancies and cross-border influences which all create a conducive environment for such activities.

In this study, Dr Hafsa Lukwata Sentongo will look at illicit trade in the town of Busia in Uganda where she will explore the cross-border patterns of illicit tobacco product trade.

Dr. Sentongo is a medical doctor who is currently the assistant commissioner for the Mental Health and Control of Substance Abuse Division in Uganda's Ministry of Health.

This study, she hopes, will provide evidence-based insights into how policies should be formulated and how regulatory enforcement can be enhanced.

The study will analyze socio-economic factors, regulatory loopholes, and cross-border dynamics influencing illicit tobacco trade in Busia.

Busia is a town on the border of Kenya and



Uganda, located about 121 miles east of Kampala, which is the capital of Uganda.

As part of her data collection she will be conducting qualitative interviews with tobacco users, retailers, law enforcement, and community leaders, as well as quantitative surveys. The findings will provide evidence-based insights to inform policymakers on controlling illicit trade and addressing regulatory gaps.

"Ultimately, the research will propose actionable policy recommendations aimed at enhancing

regulatory enforcement, promoting cross-border cooperation, and strengthening institutional capacity to combat illicit tobacco trade in Uganda. This will help to reduce the public health risks associated with illicit tobacco products and advance tobacco control efforts in Uganda," she notes in her abstract.



How should new and emerging tobacco products in Kenya be regulated

How many different emerging tobacco and nicotine products are being sold in Kenya? What do their users know about them? How do they feel about them using them?

And most importantly what types of regulations need to be put in place for these products in Kenya? These are the questions that researcher Mary Nyangi, from the Kenya Medical Research Institute wants to answer.

According to Nyangi, between 11% and 15% of Kenyan adults smoke. While national legislation such as the Tobacco Control Act 2007 and Tobacco Control Regulations 2014 have been implemented to curb tobacco use, new and emerging tobacco products have entered the market and are either under-regulated or not regulated at all. This includes Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), Electronic Non-Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENNDS), nicotine pouches, and Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs).



tobacco use, new and emerging tobacco products have entered the market and are either under-regulated or not regulated at all.

This includes Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), Electronic Non-Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENNDS), nicotine pouches, and Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs).

“This regulatory gap allows manufacturers to exploit the market, often bypassing advertising restrictions by trading directly with retailers,” she notes in her abstract.

The findings will inform the development of comprehensive tobacco control strategies to address both traditional and emerging tobacco products, ultimately reducing the

public health burden associated with tobacco use in Kenya.

Nyangi focuses on public health and market surveillance. She recently received a grant to investigate existing and emerging tobacco and nicotine products in Kenya. Through this study, she aims to provide key insights into market trends and support policy development, ultimately contributing to improved public health outcomes in Kenya.



How have West African countries used MPOWER to help them implement the FCTC?



In 2008, a package of six tobacco control measures were found to be effective in reducing tobacco consumption.

Called the WHO MPOWER, the tools help countries fulfil provisions of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

But 16 years later how have these MPOWER policies helped different countries in West Africa implement the FCTC?

This is the question that Dr Kokou Fantognon aims to answer with his study.

Dr Fantognon is a Medical Doctor and public health professional with extensive work experience in health systems, policy, and health program management across different levels of Togo's health system.

His study will assess and compare the status of

Tobacco Control policy implementation in three West African neighbouring countries: Togo, Ghana and Burkina Faso. These countries have varying smoking prevalence, tobacco policies and degrees of implementation. The study will identify why some countries are performing well compared to others, what the potential implementation gaps are, the lessons that can be learned and the opportunities to move forward.

The results will help health researchers, policy makers, and public health officials, providing them with actionable steps and recommendations that could strengthen tobacco control policies, improve enforcement efforts,

and, by implication, reduce the tobacco-related health burdens in the region.

"The comparative character of this study allows for drawing lessons learned in cross-countries and identifying best practices that could be replicated across similar contexts in Africa. This study will be significant to contribute to the area of public health through the capacity of West African nations in fighting the tobacco epidemic," he notes in his abstract.



How tobacco industry interference is affecting policy and public opinion in Zambia?

Across the world tobacco industry interference has been identified as a mechanism by the tobacco industry to water down tobacco control policies and influence policy makers. So what exactly are they doing in Zambia – and how are they affecting policy decisions?

In this study Charity Syatalimi from the Centre for Primary Care Research in Zambia aims to investigate the strategies used by the tobacco industry to shape public health policies and influence public perceptions in the country.

Syatalimi has a background in sociology and lectures in Sociology of Mental Health at Levi Mwanawasa Hospital. She has supported various research projects at the Centre for Primary Care Research, focusing on project management, coordination, and implementation across multiple health research areas.

To examine the extent and effectiveness of tactics such as lobbying, biased research funding, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and the creation of front groups, she will



employ qualitative techniques interviewing policymakers, public health officials, civil society organizations, media, and representatives of the tobacco industry. She will also use quantitative techniques.

The research will provide a comprehensive analysis of how these tactics affect the formulation, implementation, and enforcement of tobacco control policies.

“The study will ultimately offer insights into the weaknesses in the current policy environment and provide evidence-based

recommendations for strengthening tobacco control measures in Zambia. This research will ultimately contribute to the global effort to counteract tobacco industry influence and promote public health,” she notes in her abstract.

