

## **Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL)**

**January 2010**

### **Statement of National Concern**

Social and Public Health issues arising out of Alcohol abuse in Uganda have noted significant increase in young people who have taken on drinking Alcohol. This has led to increased numbers of people seeking help and treatment related to alcohol (cancers, stroke, heart disease and Foetus Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Massive deaths of Ugandans have been registered due to high levels of toxicity of alcohol as reported in the media.

Alcohol abuse is now a major influence in the sexual risk behaviour in young people and the married and partly pushing HIV back from the stagnate level of 6.5%. It has become so easy for young people to access Alcohol and many are found drunk in early mornings. Other significant indicators of alcohol related problems include death, unintended intoxication, suicide and alcohol is the number five major cause of Poverty in Uganda. The net benefits of alcohol use to Ugandans appear to be skewed and misleading adverts add to this painful cost.

The alcohol industry has also significantly made more profits as a result; the corresponding effect has been to kill the local cottage industry, reduction in employment and incomes due to more mechanized production.

Law enforcement is weak and some times non existent aware that Uganda has laws that regulate and control the manufacture, production, trade and use of consumption of alcohol. (The Enguli Act Cap86, The Liqour Act Cap93 and the Portable Spirits Act cap 97, The Shop Hours Act 99).

Similarly law enforcement costs appear to be rising due to increase in crime and domestic violence, accidents due to drunken driving. Other significant indicators of the problem include death, unintended intoxication suicide and, being number five major cause of Poverty in Uganda. Karamoja is one of the areas significantly affected.

We recognize that price and tax measures that increase the relative cost of alcoholic beverages are highly cost effective in reducing the harm caused by alcohol to young people and heavy drinkers. We recommend that appropriate higher taxes on alcohol products be introduced. Such measures should be proportionate to the alcohol content of the beverage, and should be adjusted periodically to compensate for the effects of inflation. Given the growing capability to accurately estimate the economic costs of alcohol to society, consideration should be given to the use of dedicated alcohol taxes to fund prevention, treatment, and law enforcement programs as well as policy implementation.

Of recent there is a proliferation of shops, outside promotions and hawkers selling alcohol both in bottles and sachets at awkward hours contrary to the Law. Implementing specific laws regarding regulation of alcohol will not reduce the profits being made through alcohol, but specific places will be gazetted and this will be easy to enforce drinking hours, selling of alcohol and collecting extra taxes on all drinking places.

The government needs to recognize that reducing the number and density of outlets, locations, days and hours of opening can all reduce the harm done by alcohol. The existing systems should be strengthened to serve the public health aims of discouraging frequent and excessive alcohol consumption.

The alcohol industry working with the electronic media adverts have accepted and aired Radio and TV adverts which are misleading, erroneous, portrayed their substance in different state and glorified alcohol drinking in a different picture and yet alcohol is not an ordinary commodity.

We recommend banning all forms of alcohol advertising, promotion and sponsorship that promote alcoholic products by any means that are false, misleading or deceptive or likely to create erroneous impression about its characteristics, health effects or hazards be prohibited. In addition, appropriate health warnings or messages should accompany all alcohol marketing and advertising; the use of direct or indirect incentives that encourage the purchase of alcohol products, such as sales promotions should be prohibited and the distribution of free alcohol promotion products (e.g., T-shirts, glasses, cups, etc.) should be prohibited to minors.