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# THE GLOBE

## GAPA Bangkok consultation: Alcohol in Asia

Global Alcohol Policy Alliance

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The 2001 No 4 edition of The Globe was held over in order to report the papers which were presented from nine countries at the GAPA Asia/Pacific region consultation meeting. Participants were asked to prepare background papers on their national situation in relation to alcohol consumption and problems, together with illustrative material of the marketing tactics of the alcohol industry in their country.

GAPA wishes to acknowledge and thank the following for their support and participation: Professor Sally Casswell and Gayl Humphrey, Alcohol & Public Health Research Unit, University of Auckland; Dr Peter Anderson, Public Health Consultant, The Netherlands.

Sessional Chairperson: Anders A Aronsson, Chairman, International Institute of IOGT-NTO, Sweden; Mr M Idris, President, Consumer Association, Malaysia; Ms Bungon Ritthiphakdee, Director, Special Program Division (Tobacco and Alcohol), Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Thailand

Participants: **Cambodia:** Dr Tuy Tanrathy and Dr Mom Kong. **India:** Monika Arora. **Malaysia:** Mary Assunta, Mohamed Azmi Abdul Hamid and Ahmad Shabrimi Mohd Sidek, **Nepal:** Ms Rupa Dhital. **Philippines:** Ms Joyce P Valbuena. **South Korea:** Mrs Kyung il Park. **Sri Lanka:** Ms Pamodini Wujayanayake and Mr Olcott Gunasekera. **Thailand:** Dr Sriwongse Havanonda and Dr Tairjing Siriphanich. **Vietnam:** Mr Nguyen Nam Vinh, Mr Do Viet Tinh, Mr Nguyen Hoang Mai and Mr Do Quang Hanh.

Observers: Dr Vijay Chandra, WHO SEARO; Åke Marcusson, Germany; Terje Heggernes and Øystein Bakke, Norway; Esbjörn Hörrberg, Sweden and Ticka Levonen, UK.

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# THE GLOBE

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**Editor in Chief**

Derek Rutherford

**Editor**

Andrew McNeill

**Assistant Editor**

Andrew Varley

**Design and production**

2b Graphic Design

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**12 Caxton Street**

**London SW1H 0QS**

**Tel: 020 7222 4001**

**Fax: 020 7799 2510**

**Email: gapa@ias.org.uk**

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# GAPA consultation meeting, Bangkok

The need to develop an international network of public health advocates to promote policies about alcohol, based on evidence without influence from the commercial sector, was one of the main conclusions of the international conference held in Syracuse, New York State, in August 2000.

In the light of this the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance held its first regional meeting in Bangkok in November 2001. The Asia Pacific region was chosen because it is a key target of the global alcohol industry. A week before the consultation the Scotch Whisky Association reported a significant upturn in their Asian market, announcing a 32.8 per cent increase in sales. The SVA Chairman hoped that this marked "a return to form for one of the industry's most important markets".

The remark confirms that the alcohol industry has set its sights on the immature markets of the developing world. Since it is potentially the largest market, the Asia Pacific region is a key target.

The principal countries of growth are Thailand, where a doubling of growth is expected in the next five years, India which will increase by over two thirds, Indonesia by four fifths, and Vietnam by half. This is on top of the huge growth in consumption which took place in the previous decade, despite the regional currency crisis, poverty,

large underage population segment, and cultural norms. Thailand's exceptional growth is a result of the impact of the WTO, duty reductions and market liberalisation.

From this it should be clear why the Asia Pacific region was chosen as GAPA's first regional consultation. There is a need for public health advocates to counter the activities of the alcohol industry. In many of the Asia Pacific countries there still remains regulated and controlled markets by governments. Restrictions on advertising are in place but are being eroded. Policy makers should be aware, before any further erosion takes place, that the evidence from even mature markets in the West show that where there are bans on advertising there is 16 per cent less consumption and 10 per cent fewer road accidents than in countries without a ban.

Nine countries from the region attended the meeting and presented papers relating to their country's alcohol consumption together with illustrative material of the marketing tactics of the global alcohol industry



**Professor Sally Casswell, Anders A Aronsson, and Derek Rutherford at the opening of the consultation.**

and are published in this edition of *The Globe*.

One of the matters which representatives considered urgent was the role of the alcohol industry in the sponsorship of sport. There was particular concern in relation to the World Cup, which takes place in the region in June 2002 and on behalf of the meeting the President of Penang Consumer Association, Mr Idris, sent a letter to FIFA requesting that such sponsorship should cease.

**Derek Rutherford**

# Impact of alcohol co



**By Mary Assunta  
Consumers Association of  
Penang, Malaysia**

## I. Introduction

Many of our countries in Asia have not given alcohol the serious attention accorded to other addictive drugs such as narcotics and nicotine. Since the alcohol problem is not given the due urgency it warrants comprehensive information on

alcohol consumption and its net effects on society are lacking in most developing and low-income countries.

The reality about alcohol consumption is that the developed countries are drinking less and, in contrast, consumption in developing countries is increasing. It is falling most rapidly in the European Region and rising most rapidly in the Western Pacific Region. It is also rising in the South East Asian Region<sup>1</sup>. Alcohol transnationals are merging and fewer of them are now supplying the bulk of the world's demands. The future's market is in the developing world, particularly Asia.

Alcohol use causes 3.5 per cent of all global death and disability in the world<sup>2</sup>. This puts alcohol on the same level with measles, tuberculosis, and malaria and indicates that it is more than five times as significant as illegal drugs in terms of its impact on global health<sup>3</sup>. The burden of alcohol use falls heaviest on developing countries. This presentation will give an overview of the impact of alcohol consumption on developing countries in Asia.

## II. Overview

Most countries in Asia do not have a national policy to reduce alcohol consumption. However, in countries with a predominantly Muslim population such as Bangladesh the production, sale, and consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited by law. India's constitution declares, "the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption of intoxicating drinks." Even then, since independence in 1947 successive governments have followed different policies on alcohol and currently the central government is encouraging deregulation of alcohol production and liberal imports of alcoholic beverages. The Thai government recently decided to legalise home made spirit.

In 1998 Sri Lanka attempted to formulate a National Alcohol Policy, but it has not yet been implemented or made public. Several countries - India, Malaysia, Vietnam and Sri Lanka - have implemented piecemeal legislation such as a ban on advertising on TV and radio, but the alcohol companies still have the freedom to promote their brands in the other media and carry out sponsorship activities.

## III. Alcohol consumption

In India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Malaysia drinking patterns illustrate how the per capita consumption figures of a country do not necessarily give the true picture of consumption patterns of Asian countries. Parallel with the international and more expensive alcoholic beverages, there exist the local, cheap, potent brews, both legal and illicit, which are not computed into the national statistics.

In Indonesia the national consumption is only 2.7 per cent, however Balinese showed a high prevalence of 40 per cent of locally produced palm wine. In Nepal while the per capita consumption is 2.5 litres, there is a substantial

# Consumption on Asia

amount of home production and there is no data on consumption of smuggled or home or informally produced alcohol. Alcohol is considered an integral part of most social occasions among many ethnic groups.

In Sri Lanka a community survey of seven districts found 20 – 32 per cent current drinkers. In the rural area those who drink do so heavily. A survey in eight villages showed 71 per cent of respondents drinking daily. Use is higher among poor families. 93 per cent of respondents used locally produced alcohol, which is not reflected in the per capita consumption.

## IV. Expanding markets in Asia

The American and European markets are saturated hence alcohol transnationals are looking towards Asia and other developing countries both to expand their sales and to set up production facilities. Asia has a young

population and a growing economy. Carlsberg AS of Denmark with the recent merger has become one of the biggest brewers in the world. It is the biggest in Asia, outside Japan. Carlsberg has breweries in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, Hong Kong, and China. In Asia, Carlsberg's biggest market is Thailand.

In Thailand for several decades the Boon Rawd Brewery and its Singha label have controlled 95 per cent of the beer market. In the 1990s companies such as Carlsberg, Heineken, Miller, and Anheuser-Bush Breweries entered the market and now command a significant part of the market. Carlsberg, which entered in 1992 sells about 20 per cent of Thailand's beer, has two breweries that are a joint venture with the Danish Industrialisation Fund for Developing Countries and other Thai interests.

Heineken has the greatest presence in the developing countries. It is sold in 150 countries and brewed in 50 including

Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Papua New Guinea. About one quarter of its sales comes from the Asia Pacific and African regions, which were its most rapidly growing markets. In Indonesia Heineken Brewery owns 77 per cent of the Multi Bintang Brewery in East Java, which produces and markets Bintang, Tiger and Guinness beer.

Both beer and spirits consumption in India have been rising, possibly due to liberalisation of the Indian market. Several foreign companies have taken notice of India's increasing economic liberalisation and have entered into joint ventures with Indian companies. Anheuser-Busch entered the market through a joint venture with Bombay based Shaw Wallace and Co Ltd., India's third largest brewer. Guinness entered through a joint venture with United Breweries India.

Privatisation and opening up the market to foreign companies dramatically changes the advertising and marketing of alcohol. The Beer

**Table on prevalence and alcohol related problems in some Asian countries**

Country	Consumption (Population)	Consumption (pure alc litre)	Mortality	Accidents (Motor)	Laws
<b>India</b>	16.7–58.3% 50% -illicit	9	300-methan	25% 40%-work	Ad ban-TV, radio, Sponsorship-OK
<b>Indonesia</b>	2.7% 40% - Bali	0.13			
<b>Malaysia</b>	1 per cent 200,000	7 14-Indians		30%	Ad ban- TV & radio, Sponsorship- OK
<b>Myanmar</b>	10%	0.2			
<b>Nepal</b>	Local alcohol Integral part	2.5		8%	
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	32% 71% -Village	3.2	55 per 1000,000	20.7 per 100,000	Ad ban on TV & radio
<b>Thailand</b>	50% men 20% women	7 16.6 litres beer		62%	
<b>Bangladesh</b>	0.5% 300,000				Ban on prod, sale, consumption

Source: Global Alcohol Status Report, WHO, 2000

# Impact of alcohol consumption on Asia

Park outside the World Trade Centre in Bangkok is testimony to how foreign alcoholic beverage is promoted in Asia. In Sri Lanka the State owned Distilleries Corporation had not actively promoted its products. However, since the post-privatisation period alcohol products are widely promoted by local producers and importers.

## V. Alcohol marketing targets the poor

The alcohol transnationals are now targeting developing countries in Asia, which present a huge potential market.

In Asia both adults and children cannot escape from the big commercial labels such as Guinness, Carlsberg, Heineken, and Anchor beer adverts. In coffee shops in Malaysia, beer and stout are sold and consumed without a licence. In supermarkets, beer and stout cans are lined up beside soft drinks equating the two products. This situation is reflected in many other parts of Asia.

Transnational alcohol companies use unethical advertising and marketing tactics to get customers particularly among the lower economic sector of society. Alcoholic drinks are advertised as products which will bring sexual prowess, success, and power. Many of us will be familiar with the 'Guinness Stout is good for you' campaign of the 1980s which was successful in capturing the poorer working class because it promised to 'put back what the day takes out.' Carlsberg's 'Long Cool Dane' campaign primarily targeted Asians.

Some adverts blatantly make misleading claims about health such as DOM Benedictine which is promoted as a health restorative tonic providing resistance to colds and indigestion for mothers who have just given birth, and Guinness Stout which suggests it is good for male fertility and virility.

Just like the tobacco companies, alcohol companies too have to buy good will from the public and hence engage in sponsorship and philanthropic activities. These sponsorship activities effectively circumvent bans on direct advertising in the mass media. Hence companies such as Guinness and Carlsberg sponsor cultural, musical, and sporting events. They also offer

scholarships to poor students, buy computers for rural schools, and sponsor major local and international sporting events. The Octoberfest, a German concept, is conducted in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

## VI. Alcohol consumption creates poverty

Information presented to us indicates that our poor and our rural communities are more seriously affected. Alcohol consumption exacerbates poverty.

In Sri Lanka and Malaysia alcohol consumption is higher among poor families. In the rural areas in both countries, those who drink do so heavily, mainly locally produced alcohol. Poor households tend to spend a greater percentage of their income on alcohol. A study on the urban poor in Sri Lanka showed families that consumed alcohol spend more than 30 per cent of their total expenditure on alcohol. Another survey conducted in six Sri Lankan districts found that between 30 and 50 per cent of the income of low-income families was spent on alcohol and tobacco. Another 1997 survey found that the total expenditure on tobacco and alcohol exceeded the amount of government assistance given to the community under the government's poverty alleviation programme.

In India household expenditure on alcohol varies between 3 –45 per cent of their income. Alcohol misuse is one of the main killers of young men in India today. But its real impact is on the social and family dynamics that underlie its communities. Domestic violence and an exacerbation of poverty have made alcohol misuse the single most important problem for women in India.

In Thailand, household expenditure on alcohol has increased from 1.2 to 2.5 per cent. Though the figure is small at the moment, it is on an upward trend.

In Malaysia, the biggest victims of alcohol are the poor, particularly the rural Indian labourers who work in rubber and oil palm estates. Here alcohol is a major factor in exacerbating poverty. They drink samsu, (a locally distilled potent spirit) and toddy. Of the

200,000 drinkers, 75 per cent are samsu drinkers. A regular drinker can down six bottles a day, which works out to RM9.00 or about three-quarters of his daily pay. In a month he can spend about RM300 on samsu which is about how much he earns.

The samsu menace ruins families and contributes to the breakdown of the basic social fabric of society. Often it is the women who bear the brunt of this problem – wife battery, discord in the home, abused and deprived children, non-working or chronically ill husbands who become a burden to both the family and society. Besides loss in family income, the burden on the family is worsened when the drinker falls ill, cannot work and needs medical treatment. This pattern of locally brewed alcohol gripping the lives of poor people is evident in other developing countries around Asia.

## VII. Children and alcohol

In Western Europe there is a trend where more teenagers are turning to alcohol at a younger and younger age. This trend is also creeping into Asia. In Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines more teenagers are starting to drink alcoholic beverages at an earlier age. In the Philippines 15-16 year olds are drinking and the age is dropping to 12 years. In Thailand 50 per cent of children start drinking before the age of 15 years. 45 per cent of Malaysian youth under 18 consume alcohol regularly. Of all the legal and illegal drugs, alcohol is by far the most widely used by teenagers, and according to a national survey many are regularly drinking to excess.

In 1997 Alcopops, or alcoholic lemonades and sodas with 4-5 per cent alcohol hit Malaysia and targeted the youths. They went by brand names such as Hooch, Stinger, DNA and Two Dogs and the bottles were colourful with cartoon characters which clearly indicated they were designed to appeal to youth. They were initially sold in nightspots and soon made their way to supermarkets and sold along with soft drinks. In the UK alcopops have been in the centre of controversies and studies show that they contribute to an increase in underage drinking.

# Impact of alcohol consumption on Asia

## VIII. Loss for the nation

Drinking costs a nation billions of dollars. While the hidden cost has not been calculated for many of our countries, the burden on any nation is bound to be substantial when the cost of medical care, lost productivity through absenteeism, accidents at work, loss of job skills, salaries for police and social workers, court costs, damage to property and cars, insurance payments, etc. are added together.

Some figures:

- Malaysia - 38 per cent of those who died in road accidents; 30 per cent of hospital admissions for head injuries, 25 per cent below average in work performance of alcoholics ; 10 per cent reported having health problems; Alcoholics are 16 times more likely to be absent from their jobs
- Thailand – 62 per cent of traffic accident victims;
- India – 300 die from methanol poisoning; 3000 suffer long term disabilities such as blindness; 10 per cent of male suicides;
- Sri Lanka – the number of liver cirrhosis patients is increasing, among oral cancer patients 68 per cent were alcohol users; driving under influence of alcohol is 20 per 100,000
- Myanmar (Burma) – 11 per cent of psychiatric inpatients received primary diagnosis of alcohol dependence.

## IX. Burden is greater on poorer countries

Effects of alcohol are more devastating on developing countries. There are 1.3 billion people in developing countries living on less than US\$1 a day. In these countries, which are already faced with other more urgent basic needs problems, such as malnutrition, infectious diseases, and drought, losses and burdens due to alcohol are a criminal waste and will further stretch the already limited resources. Resources for the assessment of the alcohol problem, its prevention, and treatment are simply non-existent. Consuming alcohol will make them even poorer.

The living standards of the developing countries tell us that these countries are totally unprepared to face the onslaught of an alcohol

epidemic. In a country like India, where about 53 per cent of the population live below the income poverty line, spending money on alcohol will have serious consequences. In the state of Orissa it was poverty born of intemperance where country liquor played havoc with the meagre earnings of the villagers. All 170 families in the Chatua village were spending Rs One lakh every year on sharaab, the local brew. This amount saved within one and a half years will be enough to construct an ayurvedic hospital at Chatua for the benefit of the people in 42 villages of the area.

A more serious problem for India would be a threat to food security for the poor and this is already starting to happen through a business venture by the Canadian Multinational, Seagram. The Indian government has approved Seagram to turn coarse grains, which is the poor person's staple food, into whisky, a rich man's drink. According to Indian scientists this will have serious impact on India's food security as 150 – 200 million people still depend on coarse grains for nutrition.

The Indians do know how to make alcoholic beverages from food grains but never pursued it because of the low yield (40 litres of alcohol per tonne). More importantly, in a country where 50 per cent of its population are undernourished, it would be unethical to convert food grains into whisky. The scientists predict that the farmers will start off as contractors supplying grains to Seagram but may end up as bonded labourers. The scientists see this project as destructive either way and do not want to see the country's poor left poorer and hungry in the process.

## X. Prohibition – India's experience

In Asia's context, India's experience serves as a good reference as to whether prohibition is the right strategy to adopt. Prohibition is enshrined in the Constitution of India and the states of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Gujarat have imposed it. The Andhra people were formerly among the heaviest drinkers in India. The women blamed arrack, the local liquor popular among the rural folk, for rising

domestic violence and the impoverishment of families. A grassroots movement led by women led to prohibition, which brought a dramatic effect on society. However, Andhra Pradesh had to reverse the prohibition policy for several reasons including smuggling, failure of the state agencies to monitor the state's long border, illicit brewing, which had gone up by 20-30 times, and loss of revenue. What is clear is there must be well-grounded economic policy in place such as taxation of various kinds, safeguards against corruption, measures to deter illegal production, promotion of a social climate which discourages drinking, along with efficient enforcement, if prohibitions are to work.

## XI. Conclusion and recommendations

It is clear that alcohol should be seen from a broader perspective for us in Asia. Borrowing some lessons learnt from the tobacco epidemic the following are some suggestions for action to take:

Firstly it is important to consider some basic ground rules:

**1. Stop looking at countries according to WHO regions such as SEARO and WPRO:** The alcohol industry does not look at countries from the perspective of these divisions. They look at countries in the light of whether they are viable markets – whether the economic, social and political environment is conducive to increase sales. Hence, advocates from Asian countries from both the SEARO and the WPRO regions need to come together as we have done now.

**2. Greater surveillance of the alcohol industry:** We need to monitor the industry closely and familiarise ourselves with its tactics, language, and arguments. We need to have a deeper understanding of the industry so that we are able to tackle the problems it causes.

**3. Self-regulation does not work:** Codes, especially those initiated and drafted by the industry are not effective in controlling alcohol. That is why the industry recommends them and they will

# Impact of alcohol consumption on Asia

fight any initiative for legislative controls.

## 4. Do not enter into a dialogue with the industry.

The industry will attempt to establish partnership with the government and groups working on alcohol control which will water down their initiatives. We can learn lessons from the tobacco industry.

## 5. The industry cannot be involved in any alcohol control initiatives and activities:

When the industry sponsors control activities it is usually because they will get more mileage out of it while the programme itself is rendered ineffective. The industry is already sponsoring drunk driving education in Thailand, which is not effective.

## 6. NGOs, educators, and researchers working on alcohol control need to network:

There are many transborder issues that need to be addressed regionally or internationally such as satellite TV advertising, Internet advertising, Octoberfest, and sponsorship of international events. The alcohol control community needs to establish networks in order to address these issues collectively.

## 7. Step up media coverage:

Alcohol control advocates need to utilise the media more effectively. News coverage of alcohol problems is one effective way to put alcohol on the political agenda. A workshop on media advocacy is needed in the region.

## 8. People's initiatives:

We need to organise and mobilise a more active ground movement to take up the alcohol issue. The experiences of India and Sweden can serve as valuable reference for us.

## Recommended Action:

### A. National Action

Nationally governments must have a commitment to tackle the alcohol problem and not denounce it on one hand and promote it on the other. There must be a national policy to control alcohol abuse.

#### 1. Ban advertising and promotions

Ban on all forms of advertising, direct and indirect, and the promotional activities of alcohol companies.

### 2. Limiting the packaging, licences and availability

Ban the sale of liquor in small bottling such as 145ml. There should be a limit on the size of bottles, limit drinking hours, and limit places where alcohol can be bought. Increase legal age for purchase of alcohol to 21 years.

### 3. Alcohol tax

If health budgets of developing countries are averaging 1 per cent of the national budget it is unrealistic to expect any resources from government for comprehensive alcohol control activities. It would be more realistic to generate money from taxing alcohol more. Experience from tobacco control shows us that a separate dedicated taxation can be used for health promotion and health sponsorship funds to replace alcohol industry support of sports and other sponsorship activities, public education and rehabilitation programmes.

### 4. Eliminate subsidies

Government subsidies in the form of tax deductions for alcohol marketing as a cost of doing business must be eliminated.

### 5. Community-based health programmes

Most countries cannot afford to train health and social workers specifically to tackle alcohol problems. In communities where a major portion of the population does not read or write, it is crucial to devise simple, creative, and low budget health programmes. Local government, health groups and other community organisations should all be involved in alcohol control programmes. Health groups can play a key role in the development of comprehensive national alcohol control programmes. Simple training manuals should be developed for workers in the field.

### B. International action

The alcohol problem must be addressed in a more concerted manner by international organisations such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Drug Control Programme. We must also address market expansion to developing countries.

### 6. Global Treaty on alcohol

There must be a Framework Convention on

Alcohol Control to bring countries together to set basic standards on alcohol control.

### 7. World Trade agreements

World trade agreements need to make special provision for alcohol to ensure these agreements may not be used to weaken health and safety regulations regarding alcohol.

### 8. Duty-free status should be removed

Remove the duty free status of alcoholic beverages sold at airports and during in-flight services.

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# Impact of alcohol advertising and promotions in Sri Lanka



By Pamodini Wujayanayake

Sri Lanka is an Island nation situated in the southern tip of India. Geographically, it is a teardrop shaped mass of land with the length and width being 300 and 145 miles at the widest point. The weather is tropical. The total population is 19.04 million.

The literacy rate for both men and women in Sri Lanka is over 90 per cent (Department of Census and Statistics 1998). This is owing to the free education, which is offered to all citizens.

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country. The main ethnic groups are as follows: Sinhala, Sri Lankan Tamil, Indian Tamil and Muslim. Of these the Sinhalese are 74 per cent and are the majority. The four dominant religions are Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. 69 per cent of the population follow Buddhism (Central Bank of Sri Lanka).

A diagram titled "Indirect advertising on media" showing how alcohol companies target women through various media channels. It features three main categories: "Relationships" (with images of romantic magazine covers), "Sports" (with images of sports events), and "Musical Shows" (with images of concert posters). Below these categories, a section titled "Targeting Women" shows more magazine covers and a banner that reads "GET IT STRAIGHT".

## Do alcohol advertising and promotions target the youth?

To see if this is the case, we have to analyse the direct and indirect advertisements and promotions. In doing so we find that today's youth are targeted by the alcohol industry both through their direct and indirect advertising as well as through their sponsorship and promotions.

Through the media they advertise their products as part of a lifestyle. Alcohol is associated with pleasure, relaxation, sexuality, masculinity, and friendship. Cultural events, festivals, and even women are used as a means of advertising their product. Product placement is done in films and in television dramas in sometimes very subtle ways and in other times very boldly. We know that international movie stars are paid substantial sums to use alcohol in a scene which will be observed by millions of young people around the world. Alcohol and Beer companies sponsoring sports events shows how far they would go to promote to youth. It is well known that youth love sports and that they are more likely to emulate their idols such as sportsmen. Promotional matter distributed at supermarkets, displayed at pool parlours, nightclubs, musical events, carnivals, and restaurants are also made to catch the eye of today's youth. Free give-aways through competitions and the like do not help the situation at all. One should also take note of product placements in pornographic sites on the Internet, which are visited by children and young adults most often.

## Impact of such advertising on Sri Lankan youth

The impact of such promotions on youth is alarming. The production of beer has risen dramatically between the year 1996 and 2000. (Excise Department statistics) This is largely

# Impact of alcohol advertising and promotions in Sri Lanka

due to the reduction in price and the amount of advertising done regarding beer within that period. The total alcohol production, which was 22,500,000 litres in the year 2000, is consumed locally. The production of 'Lion' beer (a particular brand of beer) doubled in the year 1998/1999. Alcohol use in Sri Lanka has shown a steady increase from December 1998 to July 2001. (ADIC spot survey) A market shift from Arrack to Beer is visible from the statistics. The highest volume of advertising and tax reduction was also visible during this time

According to data gathered a large percentage of users consume alcohol because of a belief that it provides pleasure. The existence of this belief and the underlying themes of advertisements are one and the same which proves that advertising bears a direct impact on people.

## Other promotions



Supermarkets



Nightclubs



Restaurants



On the web



Free give-aways

## Direct advertising in media



Sexuality



Relaxation



Cultural events

Masculinity



Targeting women



Friendship

# Impact of alcohol advertising and promotions in Sri Lanka

## Social events



Carnivals



Sports events



Musical events

### The impact of alcohol use in the country

- Currently, 1/3rd of the family income is used on alcohol
- The number of cases of those hospitalised on Alcohol Psychosis, Alcohol Dependence and Alcohol withdrawal has increased by 4436 cases from 1998 to 1999. (Ministry of Health)
- The number of those hospitalised due to chronic liver disease was 1816 in 1999 as opposed to 1069 in 1989. (Ministry of Health)
- Detections of driving under the influence of alcohol were 8.86 per cent in 1990 but had increased to 20.75 in 1993. (Dept. of Traffic Police)

The current state of advertising and its impact on youth does not seem promising. Therefore it is in the hands of the authorities to study the impact and bring about policies which will prevent the children and the young adults from being targeted by the alcohol industry.

## Indirect advertising through dramas, films...



Films



Television  
dramas

# Alcohol and media: The si



**Joyce P. Valbuena**  
**Health Action Information Network, The Philippines**

## Introduction

There is little data available on the extent of alcoholism or alcohol abuse in the Philippines.

However, while there may be no official statistics available, the consequences of alcoholism are very obvious in the community

or inside homes. There are many undocumented cases of alcoholic persons who collapsed in the streets because of drunkenness. Alcoholism is a growing concern in the culture and social life of our country. In the recent years, only few alcohol-related cases have been recorded by the Philippine General Hospital. For instance last year, only six patients were admitted in that state-run hospital.

This could be due to the fact that alcoholism is not considered a medical problem by most Filipinos. Most Filipinos with an alcohol problem do not submit to medical treatment even if their condition is chronic.

Alcohol rehabilitation centres have low admission rates compared to similar institutions for illicit drug dependency. The PGH alcohol support group centre offers treatment and counselling for its indigent patients. For anonymity, patients from rich families go to private rehabilitation centres. There are also some NGOs which provide similar services and carry out advocacy work. However, more effort is needed in the Philippines in order to address the problems of alcohol abuse.

## Crime and Violence

Greater alcohol availability is associated with greater consumption and a greater number of problems.

A number of cases of sexual and drug abuse, suicide and violence among Filipinos have been caused by habitual drunkenness or alcohol intoxication. The Philippine General Hospital considers patients with blood alcohol levels of 0.05 per cent (50 mg/100 ml) to be medically intoxicated.

## Alcohol Industry: A Lucrative Business

The liquor industry in the Philippines consists of the indigenous and commercially manufactured beverages.

The production of beer and other liquors is one of the most profitable industries in the Philippines. In fact, the country's biggest beer company, San Miguel Corporation (SMC), ranked number nine in the Philippine's Top Corporations of 1999 with a total sale of \$766 million. SMC sold a total of 327.6 million bottles of beer in 1998. Liquor companies are partly owned by transnational corporations or wealthy Fil-Chinese industrialists whose businesses have been established since the Spanish colonization period in the eighteenth century.

Alcoholic drinks are also widely sold at duty free shops. For the many returning overseas Filipino workers, expensive alcoholic drinks, such as Chivas Regal whisky, are good presents for their relatives and friends.

However, because of the influx and supremacy of commercial drinks, native drinks have been confined to small-scale production.

Common in the rural areas is Lambanog (or coconut wine) which is now being sold in different flavors such as cherry, jack fruit, apple, four seasons, etc. Rice wine is also

# tuation in the Philippines

popular in the northern part of the Philippines where it retails at approximately \$3 for a 750 ml bottle.

## Drinking Filipinos

Filipinos' wine consumption increases by 10 per cent each year. In 1995, Filipinos were seen to be the number one wine drinkers in Asia consuming a total of 146,000 bottles of wine that year.

Generally, however, beer is the favourite among Filipinos principally because of its affordability compared to hard drinks. In 1998, the Filipinos were reported to have consumed about 1.25 billion litres of beer (equivalent to 3.9 billion of beer bottles). But among youth drinkers, even at \$30 cents a bottle, beer is relatively expensive for them. A \$40 cents bottle of Tanduay gin, which is stronger or more intoxicating, can fill a few hours of drinking for a small group. Middle and upper class Filipinos, on the other hand, with a much greater disposable income, could spend more money on alcohol, treating themselves to the likes of Johnny Walker and Chivas Regal which cost up to \$50.

Beers are widely available in grocery and convenience stores, but whisky, wine and other alcoholic drinks are supposedly purchasable only at licensed liquor stores. But this is not always the case. Due to lax monitoring and implementation, hard drinks can also be bought in many regular stores, even by teenagers.

Philippine law sets the minimum legal drinking age at 18 but underage drinking is widespread. Most young people get alcohol from home with or without their parents' permission. They know how to obtain alcohol – they are able to get it from friends or they can discreetly buy for themselves.

According to the 1997 Family Income and Expenditure Survey, an average Filipino family spends one per cent of its income on alcoholic

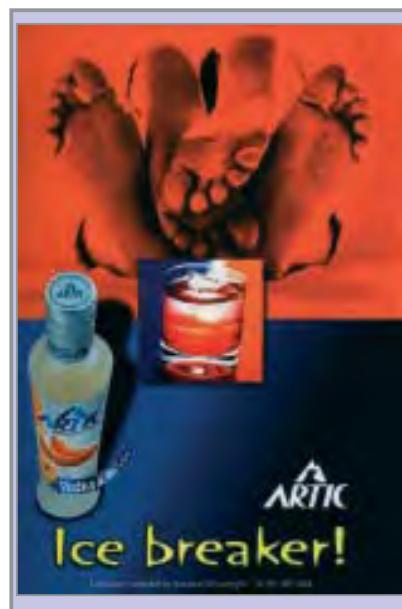


beverages. However, if for example a minimum wage earner gets \$5 a day, and if he develops the habit of drinking at least three bottles of beers every night, that would mean spending \$1 a day on beer, which is already 20 per cent of his hard earned money.

Alcohol drinking is a big part of the Filipino merry-making activities. Beer is an essential part of fiestas, birthdays, and parties. Even

when there is no special occasion, many Filipinos hang out together in the streets, in front of their houses and convenience stores drinking gin and tonic, which is a considerably cheaper alcoholic drink.

This is particularly true in a low income community where, unlike those from the middle and high income brackets who have money to go to the bars to hang out and



# Alcohol and media: The situation in the Philippines

drink. The price of drinks in the bars is about 100 per cent more expensive.

## Young Drinkers

Drinking alcoholic beverages beyond one's capacity to the point of intoxication is a risky behaviour in which most young people get involved at some time. In a survey conducted by the University of the Philippines in 1994, 60 per cent or 5.3 million Filipino youths are said to be drinking alcoholic beverages. About 4.2 million of them are males and 1.1 million are females. The study stated that most of the Filipino teenagers have tried cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. In fact, there are more alcoholic drinkers than smokers.

On the average, Filipino youths start drinking alcohol at the age of 16 or 17. However, there are also many cases when children as young as 12 years old are already drinking alcoholic beverages. About 37 per cent of the respondents in the survey have continued the habit of drinking alcohol while 33 per cent said they only drink alcoholic beverages on special occasions. Some 17 per cent said they have already decided to stop the vice of drinking.

In the Philippines, drinking is more acceptable among girls than smoking. Nevertheless, it is still the case that it is considered more appropriate for men than for women to drink. Parents are more lax with boys, giving them more freedom to drink alcohol than their sisters.

The teenagers said their family, friends, and the mass media have influenced them to experiment with drinking alcohol.

Underscoring the critical role that the family plays in youth behaviours, young people seem to take their cue from their own parents' attitudes and behaviour. Thus, a boy who grows up with an alcoholic father is more likely to become one himself.

The study indicated that those who are more likely to drink are those:

- who are not living with parents (for example, college students living in dormitories)
- whose parents approve of drinking
- who frequently attending social gatherings
- who enjoy going out to parties, bars and discos
- who do not take part in sports activities

the industry achieves its high level of sales. With creative strategies in marketing, companies can persuade most people drink beer and other alcoholic drinks. Beer and Liquor companies spend more than \$12 million on advertising. For every beer Filipinos buy, 80 per cent of the amount we pay is spent on advertising.

Alcohol advertisements present a direct link between alcohol and happiness, sexual conquest, success, and excitement. Alcohol drinkers are portrayed as heroic, attractive, athletic, or successful.

Alcohol appears in the media as part of the day-to-day lives of the Filipinos – as portrayed in soap operas, comedy shows, basketball league games, music video channels, etc.

## Advertising: Image is Everything

Filipinos are very creative and daring, which is evident when they are involved in advertising campaigns. Filipinos are also big victims of consumerism. The pictures on page 13 are samples of alcohol advertisements that circulate in the Philippines, appearing in most youth-oriented and fashion magazines.

For a long time now, advertising has deeply established the need for alcoholic beverages among Filipinos. It is through advertising that

## Marketing SMB

San Miguel Beer (SMB) is the Filipinos favourite alcoholic drink. Being a locally produced beer, its name has been steadily and deeply embedded in the Filipino psyche and it has become almost a generic name for beer in the Philippines. Its target market covers not only those from the C-D income bracket but also those in the corporate field. In 1997, SMC had spent \$15.2 million on advertising, becoming the seventh largest advertiser in the country.

**Table 1. Top alcoholic beverage companies, company sales and product brand names**

Company Name	Sales (1999)	Product Brand Names
San Miguel	\$766 million	San Miguel pale Pilsen, Super dry, Miller Genuine Draft, Cerveza negra, Red Horse Beer, Gold eagle, Blue Ice, Valor
Asia Brewery	\$100 million	Beer na Beer, Carlsberg, Stag, Colt 45, Budweiser
Tanduay Distillery	\$100 million	Tanduay Rhum Dark, Tanduay White and Gold, Tanduay Rhum ESQ and 65
La Tondeña Inc	\$206 million	Ginebra, Gordon's London Dry Gin, Oxford London, Añejo, Vino Kulafu, La Tondeña Manila Rhum
International Distillers of the Philippines	\$20 million	J&B, Smirnoff, Gilbey's, Jose Cuervo Tequila, Bailey's, Bouchard Brandy, Johnnie Walker
Destilleria Limtuaco	\$2.62 million	White Castle, Napoleon 5 Years, El Hombre Tequila, Toska Vodka, Vino de Chino, Old Captain Rhum, Ginebra Kelly, maria Clara Sangria, London Dry Gin

Source: Securities and Exchange Commission, 1999 and Ibon Facts and Figures, July 15-31, 1999

# Alcohol and media: The situation in the Philippines

**Table 2. Prices of Selected Liquors**

Brand		Price (\$)
San Miguel Beer		0.30
Blue Ice Beer		0.30
London Gin	250 ml	0.30
	375 ml	0.56
Tanduay White	375 ml	0.32
	750 ml	0.59
Ginebra San Miguel	350 ml	0.42
Emperador Brandy	375 ml	0.60
	750 ml	1.19
Gilbeys Gin	325 ml	1.23
	750 ml	2.25
Oxford Gin	750 ml	1.5
White Castle Whisky	750 ml	1.57
Napoleon Brandy	375 ml	1.80
	750 ml	2.47
Fundador Brandy	700 ml	5.94
Asti Martini		10.00
Johnny Walker Black Label	(750 ml)	21.00

\* Prices at bars are about 100 per cent higher than prices at grocery stores

Beer and liquors in the Philippines are portrayed with positive images. SMC has varied strategies, depending on what market they want to target, focusing on basic Filipino values. For instance, beers and other alcoholic beverages have been associated with thirst quenching, male bonding, friendship and camaraderie, unity, youthfulness and fun among many others. Most common in the advertisements is the use of popular local action and sexy actors and actresses as their image models.

## Some of SMB's advertisements in the past have used the following:

- S-capade (to connote summer escapade, but interpreted by others as sex escapade)
- Sarap mag beer (Feels good to drink beer)
- Sarap ng samahan (unity)
- Kahit kailan magkaibigan (friendship)
- Hero and the beer (a boy saves a girl and then they go on a drinking binge together)
- Love and courtship
- Christmas spirit
- Fiesta and other occasions
- 5-thirsty (drinking beer every 5:30 or after work to relieve stress)

**Table 3. Media Ad Expenditure (1997)**

	Rank	Total Expenditure	TV	Radio	Print
Beer and Liquor Industry	13	\$12.3 million	\$7.2 million	\$4.2 million	\$1 million

Source: 1996-1997 Philippine Advertising Media Expenses Report

## Beer advertisers have used different media:

- TV, radio, print and internet
- Music video channels, MTV
- Commercial jingles (which have become popular among youth)
- Basketball teams (at least 3 basketball teams playing in the league are sponsored by Liquor companies)
- Songs like Lakan and Inuman na which were sung by popular youth bands have become popular in the airwaves
- Octoberfest (Beer fiesta in October)
- Sponsorship of sports and youth-oriented activities
- Distributing gift items like shirts, caps, calendars, etc

These trends in alcohol advertising are something about which we should be concerned. Popular perceptions among young people about alcohol drinking are greatly influenced by advertising.

# Alcohol consumption



**Bung-on Ritthiphakdee**

## **Thai Health Promotion Foundation**

In Thailand, alcohol has been used for rituals for centuries. However, it has now become a major public health problem. It is a significant impediment to the economic development and social well being of the people.

According to the United Nation's Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO), Thailand

ranks fifth worldwide in consumption of alcohol, behind South Korea, the Bahamas, Taiwan and Bermuda

## **Consumption**

Available evidence suggests that the number of alcohol drinkers is increasing. The latest survey in 2001 found that the number of drinkers increased from 13.7 million in 1996 to 15.3 million in 2001 or increased 2.3 per cent per year.

Among these 15.3 million drinkers, 13.0 million are males (55.9 per cent of the same age group) and 2.3 million are females (9.8 per cent). The highest prevalence is among people at 25-39 years of age (39.3 per cent), and young people at 15-24 (21.6 per cent).

However, Lakhana Termsirikulchai and Poranee Wattanasomboon (1998) conducted a study on behaviours and factors related to alcohol consumption among 1,141 students aged 15-24 in Bangkok from September to October 1998. The study revealed that of 624 male students, 334 (53.5 per cent) drank alcoholic beverages and of 517 female students, 130 (25.1 per cent) did so.

### **Number and Percentage of Alcohol drinkers among people age 15 and over**

Number /Percentage	1996		Total	2001	
	Total	Male		Male	Female
<b>Population</b>	43,480.6	21,588.8	21,891.8	46,980.5	23,281.4
<b>No. of Drinkers</b>	13,743.9	11,968.6	1,775.3	15,334.6	13,011.7
<b>Percentage</b>	31.6	55.4	8.1	32.6	55.9
No. of drinkers in different age group					
<b>15-24</b>	2,439.2	2,250.4	188.8	2,469.2	2,210.4
<b>Percentage</b>	21.1	38.3	3.3	21.6	38.1
<b>25-59</b>	10,300.4	8,881.7	1,418.7	11,698.3	9,814.4
<b>Percentage</b>	38.1	66.1	10.5	39.3	66.3
<b>60+</b>	1,004.3	836.5	167.8	1,167.1	986.9
<b>Percentage</b>	20.4	36.8	6.3	20.0	37.0
					5.7

Source: National Survey by National Statistic Office, 1996 and 2001.

# and control in Thailand

## Marketing

During the past decade, Thais have tended to consume more alcohol. It was found that the rates of liquor consumption increased from 20.2 litres/person in 1988 to 35.6 litres/person in 1997 and beer consumption rose from 6.5 litres/person to 41.5 litres/person during the same period. After the economic crisis, in 1998 the consumption rates dropped to 28 litres/person for liquor and 35.3 litres/person for beer.

However it started increasing again, particularly beer, due to the market liberalization and aggressive marketing and advertising by the alcohol companies in 1999-2000.

According to the Department of Industry, there has been an increasing number of beer and wine factories in the past five years. In 1992, there were only two beer factories and these increased to six factories in 1994, 12 factories in 1996, and 18 in 1999.

Since late 1995, the "Ready to Drink" or alcoholic fruit juice has been imported into Thailand and increasingly played a greater role in the alcohol market in Thailand, targeting young people, particularly women. There are currently fifty brands available.

Beside product development, alcohol companies use advertising and marketing to increase the number of consumers. In 2000,

alcohol companies spent 2,500 million Baht on advertising. According to Media Data Resources, 19.09 billion Baht was spent during January to May 2000, with companies selling alcohol, home appliances, cosmetics, milk, and soap, increasing their outlay by as much as 60 per cent. A study by Foundation for Consumer found that 78 per cent of the alcohol advertising spending is on television and the most heavily advertised product is beer.

Besides direct advertising on television and other media, alcohol companies also use ingenious ways to promote their brands, particularly to young people. These strategies included:

- Sport sponsorship
- Sponsorship of popular TV variety programs
- Philanthropy activities
- Organise beer festival during November-December.
- Sponsor party night
- Cut the price

- Banning sales to under 18s
- Warning labelling on alcoholic beverage containers and advertising "alcohol decreases driving ability"
- Restrict alcohol advertising: for beverages containing alcohol more than 15 degrees - this is banned on radio and television during the period 05.00-22.00
- Blood alcohol concentration limits for drivers (0.05G per cent)

In conclusion, Thailand needs a stronger policy and a strict enforcement mechanism as well as effective community based programmes to curb the increasing trend of alcohol consumption and the public health impact caused by alcohol.

## Measure to reduce alcohol consumption

Although alcohol is a major public health problem in Thailand, a policy to curb this is not clearly formulated. There is, however, legislation to cut alcohol consumption and reduce harm caused by alcohol as follows:



# The alcohol problem



**Mary Asunta with Mr Idris, President Penang Consumer Association and Mr Hamid, President of TERAS**

## I. Country profile

Malaysia has a population of 22 million with about 55 per cent of the population being urban and 45 per cent rural. The Malaysian society is multi-ethnic comprising of Malays (55 per cent), Chinese

(32 per cent), Indians (8 per cent) and several other indigenous populations. GNP per capita is US\$3500 and GDP US\$85b. The average distribution of labour force by sector is agriculture – 26 per cent, industry – 28 per cent and services 46 per cent. The adult literacy rate is total 80 per cent: male – 89 per cent and female – 72 per cent. Public expenditure on health is 1.3 per cent of the GDP.

There are two main breweries, which are located in or near the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. Guinness Anchor Berhad is a joint venture between Guinness and Asia Pacific Breweries of Singapore, itself a joint venture with Heineken and a local soft drinks company. Carlsberg controls the largest shares of Carlsberg Brewery Malaysia Berhad.

We have an active local spirits industry which produces approximately US\$43.4 million (RM180million) worth of samsu, the generic name for cheap spirits, per year. These drinks average 38 per cent alcohol and are widely available illegally from outlets such as sundry shops and private residences. The smallest bottle of samsu costs as little as US\$0.36 (RM1.50).

### **Alcohol consumption and prevalence**

Malaysia, though a small country, is the tenth largest consumer of alcohol in the world. Each year Malaysians spend over US\$500million on alcohol. Whilst the per capita consumption is 7 litres, those who do drink alcohol consume heavily. Among the drinking population, the Malaysian Indians who make up about 8 per cent of the population are by far the heaviest drinkers with an annual consumption of

absolute alcohol exceeding 14 litres. Beer consumption in Malaysia at 11 litres per capita is comparable to that of European countries known for their high consumption. The easy availability of alcoholic drinks in coffee shops, supermarkets, sundry shops and plantations together with aggressive advertising and promotions are driving Malaysians to drink. The average age for alcohol dependence is 22 years.

## **II. Alcohol advertising and marketing**

With the saturation of the American and European markets alcohol companies are looking towards Asia and other developing countries not just to expand their markets but also to set up production facilities. Carlsberg AS of Denmark, the biggest brewer in the world, has its largest market in Asia. It views Malaysia as a “very important and attractive

# in Malaysia

market". It has invested about US\$20million to expand production by 25 per cent to 125 million litres a year to cater for growing demands and exports. It has about 65 per cent of the market share.

This year Carlsberg spent about US\$2million (RM7million) on just one advertising campaign to relaunch its Carlsberg brand to "draw in the younger generation of drinkers". For the launch, advertisements in the newspapers were placed to be redeemed for free tickets to a preview of the new commercial and a special screening of the movie "Rush Hour 2." For the post-launch Carlsberg organised contests every week for one month with prizes worth RM10, 000 to be won per week, attracting over 9,000 entries.

## **Restrictions on alcohol advertising**

Direct alcohol advertising is not allowed over the broadcast media and on billboards, except in the state of Sabah in East Malaysia. Alcohol advertising is permitted in cinemas, on video cassettes and the print media. Sponsorship activities are allowed. Below are provided some tactics used by the alcohol industry to market to Malaysians.

### **1. Targeting Malaysia's Poor Indian drinkers**

- a. The 1980s Guinness campaign, "Guinness Stout is good for you" has been a successful campaign in capturing the poorer working class. This drink is promoted as a drink that "will put back what the day takes out" and is appealing to the poor because it contains more alcohol than beer for the same price.
- b. Deepavali – Religious occasions such as the Hindu festival of lights is not spared in the advertising campaign. Here the Malaysian Indians, traditionally poorer and the heavy drinkers in Malaysian society are targeted.
- c. Carlsberg's "Long Cool Dane" campaign primarily targeted drinkers in the rural areas

### **2. Making health claims – dangerous lies**

- a. Some advertisements are nothing short of dangerous in their misleading claims. While it is illegal to make health claims in some countries, in Malaysia alcoholic drinks such Yomeishu which contain 14 percent alcohol, and DOM Benedictine which contain 40 percent alcohol claim health giving and medicinal properties. DOM Benedictine is promoted as a health restorative particularly targeted at mothers who have just given birth. It claims it is "simply full of goodness" and helps give you a greater resistance to colds and indigestion."
- b. Guinness Stout advertisement implies it is good for male fertility.

### **3. Targeting native drinkers**

The native peoples of Sabah and Sarawak celebrate the local rice harvest festival called Gawai. Anchor advertises its alcoholic drinks to be drunk as part of this celebration.

### **4. Sponsoring activities**

- a. Guinness Anchor beer company has often targeted the poorer Malaysia Indian community with its sponsorship activities. The company would regularly bring in film stars and celebrities from India to appeal to the Malaysian Indian cinema buffs and organise on the road variety shows in a number of major cities and towns. The company has also tried to ingratiate itself with the Indian community by sponsoring variety shows in cooperation with social organisations such as the Malaysian Indian Graduates Association to raise funds for scholarships for poor Indian students.
- b. Carlsberg aimed at getting youngsters to be Information Technology literate by pledging to give 10 cents for every crown cork or can-ring from small bottles or cans. The real intention of this is of course to increase consumption in the name of charity.

## **Alcohol advertising in the future**

Alcohol companies have already started sponsoring music and sports. Were there to be a ban on alcohol advertising in the future, the alcohol companies would undoubtedly take the same route as the tobacco companies - indirect advertising or brand stretching. This is an unhealthy move.

## **III. Designer alcoholic drinks**

More teenagers in Malaysia are starting to drink alcoholic beverages at an earlier age. 45 per cent of Malaysian youths under 18 consume alcohol regularly. Of all the legal and illegal drugs, alcohol is by far the most widely used by teenagers, and according to a national survey many are regularly drinking to excess.

A few years ago new designer alcoholic drinks specially targeting teenagers entered the Malaysian market. These are alcoholic lemonades and sodas with 4-5 per cent alcohol, commonly referred to as alcopops. They went by brand names such as Hooch, Stinger, DNA and Lemonhead and the bottles were colourful with cartoon characters, which clearly indicated they were designed specially to appeal to young people. They were initially sold in nightspots and soon made their way to supermarkets and sold just like soft drinks. In the United Kingdom alcopops have been in the centre of controversies and studies show that they contribute to an increase in underage drinking.

## **IV. Problems associated with alcohol**

### **1. Alcohol creates poverty**

In Malaysia, the biggest victims of alcohol are the poor, particularly the rural Indian labourers who work in rubber and oil palm estates. Here alcohol is a major cause of poverty. They drink samsu, (a locally distilled potent spirit) and toddy (which was introduced

# The alcohol problem in Malaysia

by the British during colonial times) Of the estimated 200,000 drinkers, 75 per cent are samsu drinkers.

The rural Indians in Malaysia look upon samsu as a scourge besieging the community, which has been worsening over the decades. They spend about US\$5.5million (RM20million) a year on samsu. These drinks are packaged in small bottles of between 140-175ml and sold for as little as US\$0.40-\$0.80 (RM1.50 – 3.00) At such incredibly low prices, it is obvious that these potent drinks are packaged specially to appeal to the poor. A regular drinker can down six bottles a day, which works out to RM9.00 (US\$2.50) or about three-quarters of his daily pay. In a month he can spend about RM300 (US\$80) on samsu which is about how much he earns.

According to a survey conducted by the Consumers Association of Penang, there are over 150 brands of samsu available in the market. The brands are wide ranging from western images such as Apollo, 007 and Father Christmas, and that of Indian historical heroes such as Sivaji, Veera Pandian, and Asoka to animals such as cat, snake, peacock and lion and even Hollywood's King Kong. These are very potent drinks and the strength ranges between 37-70 per cent proof.

The labels on these samsu bottles make all kinds of outrageous claims including that it is good for health, it can cure rheumatism, body aches, low blood pressure, and indigestion. Labels also claim it is good for the elderly, painful joints, those with poor appetite and for mothers who are lactating. It is not surprising that with such claims even the women have started to consume alcohol. These drinks are sold mainly in sundry shops, without liquor licence, and used various gimmicks and sales tactics to encourage samsu drinking.

## 2. Road accidents

The Road Safety Council estimates that 30 per cent of road accidents nation-wide are caused by drinking and driving. Drivers have 24 hours within which to report a crash, causing a likely under-reporting of drunk driving crashes.

## 3. Domestic problems

According to the Women's Aid Organisation, a local NGO, ethnic Chinese and Indian respondents listed "influence of alcohol" as the leading reason for wife battery, while across

all ethnic groups "influence of alcohol" ranked second.

The samsu menace ruins families and contributes to the breakdown of the basic social fabric of society. Often it is the women who bear the brunt of this problem – wife battery, discord in the home, abused and deprived children, non-working or chronically ill husbands who become a burden to both the family and society. Besides loss in family income, the burden on the family is worsened when the drinker falls ill, can't work and needs medical treatment.

## V. LEGISLATION REGULATING ALCOHOL

### a. Selling and serving alcoholic beverages

Retailers are required to obtain a licence to sell and serve alcoholic beverages. However a licence is not required to sell beer in bottles and cans. Most coffee shops, however, will sell beer and routinely provide a bottle opener so that the beer can be consumed at the premises. This is illegal, as a Beer House Licence is required to serve beer on the premises.

### b. Illegal sales

There are numerous houses and sundry shops selling liquor without a licence. 90 per cent of samsu is sold illegally in Malaysia. This is an offence under Section 32(1) and 33(1) of the 1976 Excise Act, which also states that the licence issued must specify the precise place where the sale is allowed. A licensing board which is established by the state rarely turns down applications. Industry sources estimate that there are about 35,000 licensed outlets nation-wide.

### c. Drinking and driving

The legal limit for drinking is 80 mg of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood. If caught driving while over the legal limit the penalty is a RM2000 (US\$800) fine or a maximum of six months jail sentence or both for the first offence along with loss of licence.

## VI. Taxes

Taxes are a flat rate and do not rise with inflation. In addition to duties and excise tax,

the government levies a sales tax of 20 per cent. Alcohol taxes are often regarded as "sin" tax and the alcohol industry often lobbies to keep taxes low. All in all the government collects in total (import duties, excise duties and sales tax) about RM1billion in taxes from alcohol per annum.

## VII. CAP's initiatives to fight alcohol

CAP has been campaigning against alcohol since 1988 and our initiative has been nationwide. We have taken a multi-prong approach to addressing the problem.

- a. We have been monitoring the alcohol industry and lobbying the government for tighter legislation such as a total ban on alcohol advertisements and promotions in all the media, limiting licences and sales outlets and increasing taxes. We succeeded in getting a ban on liquor packaged and sold in small plastic sachets.
- b. We have also produced educational materials such as booklets, posters and pamphlets for mass distribution and conduct educational programmes and workshops among various groups such as rural workers.
- c. We have organised and mobilised women in the plantation sector to take on the samsu problem themselves called "Women Against Alcohol". They report those who sell liquor illegally to the Customs officers, organising rallies in the estates and holding workshops for women, youth and children and basically appealing to the men to give up drinking samsu.
- d. Utilising the media – we have issued regular press statements and feature reports in the press to create a debate for alcohol control. We have also protested against the various sponsorship and promotional activities of the alcohol industry.

## VII. Conclusion and recommendations

The alcohol problem besetting Malaysia's rural population should be seen in the light of a poverty problem rather treated in isolation. The government, as a whole and not just the Ministry of Health, needs to have a clear policy on

# The alcohol problem in Malaysia

alcohol. Measures taken should be multi-sectoral and geared for long-term goals such as decreasing consumption. Alcoholic beverages should be treated as a highly regulated product.

## Recommendations:

1. Ban all forms of advertising, (direct and indirect), sponsorship and promotional activities of the alcohol companies including contests, redemption schemes, sponsorship sports and variety shows and special offers at happy hours. Ban the use of women to promote alcohol directly to customers in restaurants, bars and lounges.
2. Introduce a licensing system that limits the number and locations for sale, time of availability, and the size.
3. Ban the sale of liquor in small sizes such as 145ml. There should be a limit on the size of bottles and limit drinking hours
4. Alcohol taxes should be further increased. There should be a separate dedicated tax on alcohol, which can be channelled to alcohol control activities.
5. Duty free status of alcohol sold at airports, in duty free shops, and on board the national carrier should be eliminated. Tax exemptions for alcohol advertising and marketing as a cost of doing business should be eliminated.
6. Step up the enforcement of the law to curb illegal sales of liquor, especially in sundry shops and homes. Enforce the Beer House Licence on coffee shops to curb serving of beer without a licence.
7. Alcohol control activities should be seen as the responsibility of local government, the health sector, and the local community. Address the underlying problems that drive people to drink such as poverty, inadequate living, and working conditions.
8. Develop alcohol rehabilitation programmes nation-wide, particularly in rural areas to include hospital-based care as well as residential and non-residential care and after-care.

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# Alcohol and young people in Nepal

By Rupa Dhital, child worker in Katmandhu

## Background

Being a multicultural and multi-ethnic country, Nepal is largely seen as an ambivalent society regarding alcohol use. But with the passage of time, traditional sanctions and caste-bound restraints have disappeared. The use of alcohol and drugs affects all strata of society. The alcohol industry is powerful and enjoys a stronghold on the national economy generating one of the highest revenues. Alcohol policy favours the marketing of the product, and alcohol is available everywhere and to all age groups without any restriction. The easy access to and availability of alcohol have created an extremely conducive social environment, especially among the young, for people to begin drinking. The anti-alcohol movements started by women's groups resulting in dry-zones and prohibited areas, though enjoyed initial success, have not been sustainable due to market pressure and lack of legal standing.



In 2000, I had the opportunity to co-ordinate a national research programme for CWIN (Child Workers in Nepal) as part of a Local Action project supported by FORUT. It was the first large-scale study in the country covering 24,00 households in 16 districts representing both

# Alcohol and young people in Nepal

rural and urban areas as well as all ecological and development regions. The study provides the baseline information on the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs across different strata of the population in terms of extent, context, and patterns of consumption. Beside the adult population, the study also examines initiation to drinking and level of consumption among children and youth in the age group 10-17.

The study found that about 60 per cent of the Nepalese population have experienced alcohol and 41 per cent have taken it during the last 12 months. Among those who have ever drunk alcohol, 38 per cent were found to be using it regularly (1-5 days in 30 days) and 10 per cent are daily users (20+ days in a month). More men than women drink (21 per cent female as compared to 50 per cent male taking any type of beverage in the last 30 days).

Regarding alcohol types, homemade brews fermented from grains (jand/chang) and liquors distilled from grain and raw sugar (raksi) are the most common drinks. But factory produced beers, distilled liquors, and imported drinks are also common.

The context of alcohol use is diverse and differs widely by gender. Access to the alcohol market is more available to men than women. While men drink both inside and outside the home, women's drinking is mostly confined to the house. But it is the women who are mostly the producers of the homemade alcohol.

One third of the sampled households were producing alcohol for both consumption and sale. The per capita production of alcohol was 33 manas (16.5 litres) of which two thirds are sold. The per capita income for alcohol was Rs. 327 per month making the economic contribution of alcohol in the household quite significant and a major source of income in some of the poorest households.

At the national level, alcohol is a big industry with more than Rs.12 billion invested in over 50 large and medium distilleries and 5 large breweries which, according to the industry sources, directly and indirectly provide employment to 50,000-100,000 people. The government presently collects revenue of around Rs. 5 billion from the liquor business

which is a considerable contribution to the total national revenue. The production of alcohol has increased drastically from 400-600 per cent during the last ten years.

## Alcohol and Young People

As a sub-sample of the main survey, a total of 426 children and youths, 58.5 per cent boys and 41.5 per cent girls, aged 10-17 years were interviewed from the sample households. Based on their ethnicity, 56.6 per cent belonged to groups which traditionally use alcohol, whereas 43.4 per cent belonged to non-user groups. 64.8 per cent came from rural and 35.2 per cent from urban areas. The use of alcohol was examined through prevalence based on the information collected on both current and lifetime use. The overall prevalence among children aged 10-17 is 17.4 per cent for current (in the last 12 months) and 27.2 per cent for lifetime use. Among them, only 9.2 per cent reported drinking in the last 30 days, most of them 1 to 5 times. The percentage of regular users (20+ days in 30) is very low at 0.8 per cent. The current use is considerably less than lifetime use by about 10 percentage points. The prevalence among boys (21.8 per cent) is about double that of girls (11.2 per cent) indicating gender variation in drinking behaviour. The median age of initiating drinking is 13 years. Traditional and cultural occasions appear to be the most important occasion for initiating drinking (60 per cent).

In a previous survey (1998) among 277 urban youths (154 male, 123 female) in age group 18-23 in five colleges of Kathmandu, it was found that 63.5 had experienced alcohol at some point in their lives. Among them, 61 per cent had their first taste of alcohol before the age of 15. Among those initiated, 11 per cent reported drinking 'regularly' currently, 23 per cent 'frequently', 58 per cent 'occasionally', and 8 per cent 'not at all'.

## Alcohol and Advertising

Advertising is a new and growing industry in Nepal. Alcohol and tobacco products form a prominent part of advertising. According to the Association of Advertising Agencies in Nepal,

alcohol accounts for 30 per cent of the Rs. 2 billion industry turnover.

Alcohol advertisements feature prominently in the mass media as well as public displays in the form of hoarding and billboards. There has been no restriction due to the specific nature of the product and its possible health and social impacts. The only exception has been that, for the last two years, alcohol advertisements have been banned on the electronic media, specifically national radio, television, and private FM channels. However, there is no restriction on print media and the public display. It is not uncommon to see the city skylines, roads, walls of shops and houses, and national highways teeming with alcohol hoarding, billboards, banners, and posters. In the print media, most newspapers and magazines feature alcohol advertisements on a daily basis. The manufacturers also publicise their products through the sponsorships of public events such as sports, music, and cultural festivals.

Advertisement is governed by the National Broadcasting Act 2049 (1992) which discourages advertisement for alcohol substances from print media but does not impose any prohibition. The Act levies a minimum of Rs.105 tax for alcohol advertisement. In 1998 alone, the national television and radio earned Rs. 27.5 Million and Rs. 1.25 Million from alcohol and tobacco advertisements respectively. For public display, through hoarding and billboard, there is no restriction on alcohol advertisement which addresses the special nature of the product. They go through the same process as other commercial products and hoardings are allowed to be displayed according to the rules of the local city or village level administration. Advertisements are in line with the free market policy adopted by the government.

For the first time in February 1999, the Health Ministry, with the co-operation of WHO, issued the decree to ban alcohol advertisement in the electronic media, specifically radio and television. They replaced them with counter-advertisements and health messages to compensate the lost revenue for the media. This has cut down the sponsorship of prime

# Alcohol and young people in Nepal

time programmes on radio and television. However, there is no restriction on most of the foreign satellite channels which continue to air such advertisements. Since the ban, the advertisers have focused on the print media and public display more than before.

It can be said that the print media, as ever, thrives on alcohol advertisements. Most of the newspapers and magazines feature multiple alcohol advertisements on an almost daily basis. In the month of January 2000 alone, 245 alcohol advertisements for liquor and beer appeared in twenty-five widely read dailies and weekly newspapers published in Kathmandu which would mean nearly 4000 advertisements in one year. A survey done for the twelve months of 1999 in three leading newspapers in the country, one government (Gorakhapatra) and two private (Kantipur and Himalaya Times) revealed the following results as shown on table 1.

Assuming that most of the reading public are divided between these three most widely read national newspapers, then they have a large exposure to advertisements. It also indicates the level of investment in advertisement from the alcohol industry. Kantipur Publications, which runs two daily magazines, a weekly magazine, and several periodicals as well as owning the FM radio station, is seen as the media house featuring the highest number of alcohol advertisements. During festivals and events like sports, advertising is intensified. In the month of July 1998, 176 alcohol advertisements were printed in thirty daily and weekly newspapers and only in that month ten new brands of scotch, whiskey and vodka were introduced in the market with heavy advertising. It was the occasion of the football World Cup.

After the first intervention at the beginning of 1999, the government again proposed another act in December 2001 aiming to ban alcohol and tobacco advertisement in the media, including print media. This move was opposed by the advertisement and alcohol industry and it was not followed through. However, the present state of affairs could be influenced dramatically if the new decree passed by the government is implemented.

In August 2001, the Home Ministry announced tough new provisions for the sale, distribution, and consumption of alcohol. It was a decision reflecting the special political climate of the country and growing demand for alcohol control as taken up by the Maoists who have been waging a 'people's war' in the country for the past six years.

Even before the Maoists, the anti-alcohol movement led by women had succeeded in spreading to various parts of the country and creating a number of alcohol free zones. The new agreement between the Home Ministry and the All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary), which is the women's wing of the Maoist party, contains tough measures against production, distribution, consumption and advertisement of alcohol:

- Prohibition of drinking under the age of 25 and selling under the age of 21
- Allowing only a certain number of outlets selling liquor - four shops in each ward of metropolitan city, three shops in sub-metropolitan, and only two shops at the VDC level
- Limited hours for alcohol sale - from 2- 6 PM

- Banning the distillation of liquors from food grains
- Sale of alcohol not allowed within 300 metres (in urban areas) and 500 metres (in rural areas) from religious and educational institutions
- Ban of alcohol advertisement in radio, television, in newspapers and magazines and through public display.
- Announcement of 'liquor free day' on the first and second days and the last two Saturdays of every month (pay days and holidays).
- Not issuing new licences for producing alcohol and regulate the existing ones and diverting them to produce other things
- Necessary law reformation in order to implement the new agreements

The agreement has been met with both approval and criticism. While social organisations have appreciated its finer points, such as setting of a legal drinking age, proposing zoning laws that would limit alcohol sales to particular areas, drastically reducing the number of alcohol sale outlets, and banning advertising of alcohol both in the print and electronic media. the private sector has protested by saying it represents the government's failure to protect investments. The private sector has accused the government of buckling under the pressure - in this case, extreme pressure in the form of explicit threats. Before the agreement, the Maoist activists had destroyed one of the largest distilleries in western Nepal. The agreement was also opposed by the traditional alcohol-user cultural groups who criticized the decision as short-sighted and compromising the cultural rights of people. The advertising industry also protested against a blanket ban on alcohol products, demanding that a global standard should be followed and the people's right to information and choice be respected. However, it has conceded that advertisement should be regulated in form, contents, and timings.

The government decision was supposed to be effective by 1st October 2001. But at the moment, it seems on the hold due to the changing political scenario in the country

**Table 1: Alcohol and Tobacco advertisements in three leading newspapers in year 1999**

Product	Newspapers			Total
	Gorakhapatra	Kantipur	Himalaya Times	
Liquor	109	297	98	504
Beer	329	179	314	822
Cigerattee	60	238	46	344
Khaini	04	356	02	362

# Alcohol and young people in Nepal

where the Maoists are entering into different rounds of dialogue with the government.

## Advertisement & Young People

Some laws and policies address the age of sale and consumption. Child Act 1992, Provision 16, prohibits the use of children in selling alcohol, drugs, and other illegal substances. Hotel Regulations and the Sale and Distribution of Alcohol Act, 2023, Section 7, has a provision on prohibition of selling and servicing alcohol to children under 16 years and persons intoxicated with alcohol. Similarly, a Bill passed in June 2000 bans the sale of alcohol to minors (under 16) and bans production and sale of the plastic pouch liquor, a low quality alcohol often consumed by young people because of its convenient size and cheapness. However, no law addressed the issue of an age-limit of the target groups for advertisements with the intention of regulating their content and timing. Alcohol advertisers do not have to pay any attention to the nature, content, and targeting of their message as is the case with any other consumer product.

The print and electronic media have always targeted young people. Beer advertisements, especially, are almost always youthful. Sponsorship of music and sports events is exclusively targeted towards young people. Perhaps the most striking form of targeting of young people is breweries' sponsorship of excellence awards for the best students passing their national high school examination. The advertisements are intensified during festivals and events such as football tournaments. In addition, heavy promotion of beer is made through discount stores to encourage young people to buy and participate during festivals and holidays. The move of distilleries to produce pouches of liquor which are convenient and attractive to both youth and children is a form of product promotion.

Print media and hoardings, even when not targeted at young people, are open exhibitions to which children and young people are exposed. It has only been a short time since the electronic media has stopped airing alcohol advertisements, but international satellite channels continue to do so.

In our survey we collected information on media exposure of children and youth. It shows that, of the children who ever experienced alcohol advertising, the highest percentage listen to Radio Nepal daily (89.7 per cent). This is followed by those who watch Nepal television (69.8 per cent) and Nepali/Hindi movies in a hall or by video (63.8 per cent), and by those who read Nepalese Newspapers or magazines (48.3 per cent) and watch satellite channels (37.1 per cent). The percentage listening to Radio FM is the smallest (11.2 per cent) because it is only broadcast inside the Kathmandu Valley.

Among the media, Radio Nepal (the national station) and the Nepal TV (the national channel) are the most common. However, it is difficult to see the correlation of media exposure and young people's use of alcohol as the respondents are mostly from rural areas where radio and television are only partly available.

It can be assumed that the media can play an important role in influencing young people's exposure to alcohol. It is said that by the time teenagers reach driving age, they will have seen 75,000 American advertisements for alcohol. Drinking alcohol and using tobacco is portrayed as glamorous and without serious consequences. Advertisements change attitudes about drinking among young people. Studies have suggested young people reporting more positive feelings about drinking and their own likelihood to drink after viewing alcohol advertisements.

Besides the image sold by the media, the marketing and promotion of alcohol products, exposure to alcohol is largely determined by the social environment in which the young people reside rather than individual choice alone. Drinking in the family, social, and cultural environment, accessibility and availability of alcohol, and other socio-psychological circumstances all influence the young people. In our survey, 57.6 per cent reported having shops and restaurants selling alcohol in their neighbourhood and 88 per cent said their neighbours used alcohol, 39 per cent had their family producing alcohol at home, and 60 per cent reported parents

drinking. Almost 29 per cent knew that their friends took alcohol sometimes. The survey reported a positive association between alcohol use at home and children's drinking, and the accessibility and affordability of alcohol and children's drinking.

## Conclusion

For a long time, alcohol advertisement had gone unrestricted. It has enjoyed the same privileges as any consumer product which has no social or health impact. However, in the last couple of years, probably due to international and national pressure, the government has been trying to introduce various restrictions. The ban on electronic media since early 1999 was approved by the general public, but it neither stopped other forms of advertisement and promotion nor decreased the volume of consumption as shown by the production data of distilleries and breweries. The effort to introduce the blanket ban in all media, including print media in early 2001, was mired with controversy.

There was concern from both the media and advertising agencies over the loss of revenues for the government as well as right of the consumers to be informed and choose. It was also stated that without advertising, fake products would inevitably flood the market with consequent damage to the consumer. The advertisers pointed out that, even if there is a ban, the industry would invent alternatives ways to promote its products, such as offering different schemes for discounts, and it would therefore not serve the purpose of bringing consumption down. The major problem was not only the advertising. Measures had been devised to regulate the supply and distribution of alcoholic drinks.

The radical measures proposed by the government in August 2001 are a revolutionary statement on regulation rather than prohibition. The measures have been taken in the special political climate of the country where the government is trying to introduce a range of social reforms. In such a situation, it is perhaps easier to make a commitment than act unless the necessary infrastructures are put in place. It is positive news for those

# Alcohol and young people in Nepal

concerned with the control of alcohol but presents a problem for others, especially the alcohol industry and related businesses such as retailers and restaurants. It has sparked a big debate in the country and has encouraged discussions between industrialists, the media, government, NGOs and women's groups. The positive side of this debate is that alcohol has suddenly become a prominent issue in the country and all the stakeholders are willing to accommodate thoughts and policies for the benefit of people and society. In the course of this exercise, the women's group has softened its radical stand for the prohibition of alcohol, following the model in some parts of the country which have been declared 'dry zones', towards a more regulatory approach.

The entrepreneurs have also accepted the need to regulate alcohol production and distribution and they welcome the government measures to do so. The social organisations appreciate the lively alcohol debate in the country and tough measures intended by the government. The traditional alcohol users ethnic groups, while accepting the need to control alcohol use in their communities, demand that such measures should not minimise the cultural rights of the people.

The advertisers are also willing to accept the process to regulate advertisements in line with global practice and ensure the rights of the consumers. Even though the ongoing debate is good in helping to build a national consensus on the issue of alcohol, it is still to be seen if the new law will be implemented and, if it is, whether it will be effective in cutting down the demand and supply ratio of alcohol production and consumption.

In a multi-cultural country like Nepal, where traditionally many groups use alcohol from 'womb to tomb', young people are introduced to alcohol in infancy, during family functions, and on cultural, social, and religious occasions. Alcohol is a culturally sanctioned part of life, on the one hand, and, on the other, its use is seen as pathological, having direct consequences in an individual's family affecting women and children by way of domestic violence, poverty, debt, scarcity of food, loss of social prestige. The direct impact

on family because of drink has been neglect, abuse, and malnutrition, dropping out of school, and running away from home. It is within this ambivalence and complex socio-cultural reality that the attempt to address the alcohol issue should be based. Here, the advertisement is only a part of the bigger reality.

For the effective control of alcohol in a society, a holistic approach is required which adequately addresses social, economical, cultural, traditional, and other realities. For a change to occur in any society, there has to be a healthy balance between policies and infrastructures, between law implementation and the socio-cultural aspirations of people. Ultimately, alcohol control is a matter of changing attitudes which can be accelerated by means of realistic regulations, adequate education, and empowerment of people. In order for alcohol restriction to be successful, proper mechanism needs to be built at the policy level for implementing, monitoring, and evaluation. A national consensus has to be built in order to lend weight to this important social action. For a movement to be sustainable, however, it is up to the peoples and communities who are the real bearers of change. And such a change is possible only through conviction and not through force.

**Coordinator: Local Action against Alcohol and Drugs, CWIN**

**Researcher: Alcohol Use in Nepal with reference to children, May 2000, CWIN**

**P.O.Box 4374, Kathmandu, Nepal**

**E-mail: rdhital@mos.com.np**

# The situation in Cambodia



**Mom Kong**

**Dr Mom Kong, Tobacco and Health Programme Manager of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Phnom Penh.**

The population of Cambodia in 1995 was some 10.5 million of which 5.7 million were aged 15 and over. The majority, 79.3 per cent, live in rural areas.

Cambodia is a mainly Buddhist country.

## Consumption and harm

Accurate per capita alcohol consumption figures have not been published. The WHO estimated that, in 1996, the total per capita alcohol consumption in pure alcohol for persons over 15 was 0.34 litres, of which 0.20 was spirits and 0.14 beer. Although spirits have traditionally been the leading alcoholic beverage in Cambodia, some domestic breweries exist. After the turbulent times, Cambodia is now opening its markets to the internationals.

Some work has taken place in the country's capital Phnom Penh in relation to the effects of alcohol on society, particularly in relation to domestic violence and traffic accidents. The Department of Sexual Trafficking and Violence states that between 2000-2001, alcohol was the cause of 33 per cent of the 122 cases of domestic violence. Other causes of violence were adultery (33 per cent), gambling (16 per cent), and poverty (18 per cent).

In their January-June 2001 report, the Office of Police Traffic, Phnom Penh, giving the causes

for the 231 reported traffic accidents, named alcohol as the cause in 15 per cent of the cases. The majority (54 per cent) were unaware of the traffic legislation and 29 per cent were speeding. Other causes count for the remaining 2 per cent.

## Preventative action

ANRA has run some awareness programmes on tobacco and alcohol. The target groups have included young people, soldiers, and police. Lack of financial resources forced ANRA to drop the alcohol element and the programme now concentrates on tobacco.

## Advertising

Street advertising in Phnom Penh is increasingly popular. Back in 1994, ANRA recorded some 35,944 adverts and billboards. Of these, 46 per cent were for tobacco, 38 per cent for alcohol, 7 per cent for soft drinks, 6 per cent for business, and 3 per cent for other products. Alcohol was also advertised on 16 separate occasions on television during the main viewing hours (6pm to 11pm).

With the Cambodian market opening to the international brewers and distillers, they all now run rather basic advertising campaigns in the country. Some brewers even provide weddings with free beer. All brewers produce a vast quantity of varying promotional material and are spending money in providing popular restaurants and beer gardens with umbrellas and other brand decorated accessories.

The number of those in South Korea who consume alcohol is growing. The percentage of drinkers has increased from 55 per cent to 65 per cent during the last decade (Figure 1). In 1987, the number of drinkers overtook the number of non-drinkers.

During last five years, whilst the number of the male drinkers has stayed much the same, the number of the female drinkers has increased by 3 per cent. This trend can be related with the increase of women working outside homes.



**With Tiger beer you can win all-paid trips to Japan.**

# Alcohol in India



## Monica Arora, Programme Manager of HRIDAY/SHAN

Prohibition is incorporated in the Constitution of India among the directive principles of state policy. Article 47 says: "The state shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people as among its primary duties and in particular, the state shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the use except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health."

During the pre-independence period, Mahatma Gandhi himself issued several strong statements against the sale and consumption of alcohol.

### The Alcohol Situation in India

Alcohol is one of the commonly consumed intoxicating substances in India. It has traditionally been drunk in tribal societies, although it has won increasing social acceptance among other groups, urban males being the prime example. It is easily available and widely used, especially at festivals such as Deepawali and Holi. At the moment the use of alcohol is infrequent among women who also tend to resist the habit among male family members.

Between 15 and 20 per cent of Indian people consume alcohol and, over the past twenty years, the number of drinkers has increased from one in 300 to one in 20. According to The Hindustan Times, it is estimated that of these 5 per cent can be classed as alcoholics or alcohol dependent. This translates into about five million people addicted to alcohol.

Of what is actually consumed, the Intake of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) is growing at

the considerable rate of 15 per cent a year. Again, The Hindustan Times says that 65 per cent of the Indian liquor market is controlled by whiskey manufacturers. The state of Kerala stands first in per capita consumption of liquor at 8.3 litres, followed by Punjab 7.9 litres.

### Alcohol Situation in India among youth

Today in India, the tendency to alcohol consumption has percolated down to the youth. The media has played a leading role in encouraging the use of alcohol among young people by such means as the portrayal of drinking in congenial social settings, by associating the habit with glamour and celebrity status, and by direct and indirect advertising.

Over the years, the age at which youngsters begin to consume liquor has come down in Kerala. In 1986 the age was 19, by 1990 it had dropped to 17, and by 1994 the age was 14.

### Indian liquor brands

The varieties of alcohol manufactured for consumption in India are:

- Beer
- Country Liquor
- Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL)
- Wines

Indian liquor brands have registered significant growth in recent years - some of the top Indian alcohol brands showing an increase of as much as 50 per cent in sales (1993-97). United Breweries registered an increase of nearly 20 per cent in sale in the year 1998-99.

### Taxes on alcohol

Alcohol is a significant contributor to government revenues in many states. In most states this accounts for over 10 per cent of total state tax revenues, whilst in the Punjab this accounts for over one third.

### Policy measures in India

Alcohol policy is under the legislative power of individual states.

Prohibition, enshrined as an aspiration in the Constitution, was introduced and then withdrawn in Haryana and Andhra Pradesh in the mid-1990s), although it continues in Gujarat, with partial restrictions in other states – Delhi, for example, has dry days. There was an earlier failure of Prohibition in Tamil Nadu

Increasing taxes as a means of reducing alcohol consumption is problematic as it has been shown to be unresponsive to price change. Tax increases will further add to economic hardship for consumers and have little or no impact on the reduction in other negative impacts. There would, however, be an increase in corruption, crime, and the production and consumption of illegal liquor.

An important aspect of policy is to delay initiation among youth. One way of doing this is to enforce age limits. The legal minimum age to purchase liquor ranges from 18 years in some state to 25 years in others. Delhi has minimum age limit of 25 years. So far, the efficiency of enforcement has not been studied. It has, however, been shown that an increase in the age of legal drinking from 18 years to 21 years achieves nearly 60 per cent of the effect of prohibition on alcohol consumption.

# Alcohol in India

## Legislation: alcohol advertisement

The Cable Television Network (Regulation) Amendment Bill, in force September 8, 2000, completely prohibits cigarette and alcohol advertisements. The government controlled channel, Doordarshan, does not broadcast such advertisements but satellite channels however are replete with them.

## Efforts to counteract the problem

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has been active in this field. In 1985-86 it urged the establishment of a reduction programme. The ministry co-operates with media and youth organisations and collaborates with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and with NGOs involved in the problem. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in partnership with

the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), has launched three major initiatives for alcohol and drug demand reduction.

Non-Governmental efforts have been led by the Indian Health Organisation (IHO), Youth for Christ India (YFC), Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth (HRIDAY), and the Student Health Action Network (SHAN).

# Alcohol consumption in Vietnam



**By Nguyen Nam Vinh, Do Viet Tinh, Vietnam  
Standardization and Consumers Association (VINASTAS)**

## 1. Classification of alcohol production in Vietnam:

### 1.1 "Home-made" alcohol:

This kind of alcohol is very popular in Vietnam. It is normally made by a great number of households in the countryside and widely consumed by the majority of people, especially those in the countryside or with low income.

The total production of this type of alcohol is estimated at 242,412 litres per year (1997). However, the "home-made" alcohol is made in a traditional and primitive way and often contains poisonous substances. See Table 1.

### 1.2 Wine:

Small manufacturers use sugar to produce wine from fruits. Normally, they use 0.25 kg of fruit to make 1.0 litre of wine.

### 1.3 Vodka:

Vodka is normally made from grain, which is very cheap and abundant in Vietnam. There

are two major vodka distillers which are state-owned companies located in Ha Noi (Ha Noi Alcohol Company) and Ho Chi Minh City (Binh Tay Alcohol Company). Their products are not of a very good quality, and prices are not affordable by the majority of Vietnamese people.

### 1.4 Rum

This type of alcohol is made from the side products of sugar manufacturers such as Bien Hoa and Hiep Hoa Sugar Company. Low quality and output.

### 1.5 Liquor

Vietnamese liquor is made of Vodka mixed with fruit juices, such as strawberry, or coffee added with some artificial flavours and chemical colours.

Quality is also low. In general, there is no typical Vietnamese alcohol which enjoys a good reputation like that of Chinese Maotai or Japanese Sake.

**Table 1 : Some specific contents of "home-made" alcohol**

Alcohol content	30-40%
Aldehyde	235mg/l
Ester	3,650 mg/l
Furfural	3.6 mg/l
High alcohol	767 mg/l
Methyl	0.6%
Acid	1,400 mg/l

**Table 2 : Alcohol Output by sectors** Unit: 1,000 litter

No.	Sectors	1997	1998
1	State-owned	16,810	20,322
2	Foreign-invested	500	800
3	Private	2,580	2,838
4	Imported	1,890	1,920
5	Home-made	242,412	242,412

# Alcohol consumption in Vietnam

**Table 3 : Alcohol Consumption - 1997**

No.Sectors	OUTPUT		VALUE		
	Output (1,000 litres)	Percentage (%)	Value (USD)	Percentage (%)	Consumption per head (litres/head)
1 State-owned	16,810	6.40	134,387	44.30	0.220
2 Foreign-invested	500	0.19	6,241	2.10	0.010
3 Private	2,580	0.98	3,232	1.10	0.031
4 Imported	1,890	0.72	158,355	52.20	0.030
5 Home-made	242,412	91.70	1,212	0.20	3.230
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>264,192</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>303,427</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>3.521</b>

## 2. The Vietnam Alcohol Manufacturers:

### 2.1 Ha Noi Alcohol Company:

Built with French technology in 1898, this company can produce 5-6 million litres of alcohol per year.

### 2.2 Binh Tay Alcohol Company (in Ho Chi Minh City):

Built at almost the same period of the Ha Noi Alcohol Company, this manufacturer's capacity is also 5-6 million litres of alcohol per year.

### 2.3 Several smaller alcohol producers

Located in other provinces are capable of 100,000 to 500,000 litres of alcohol per year.

### 2.4 Foreign-Invested alcohol producers:

Together with the Open Policy of Vietnam, several foreign companies have set up their factories in Vietnam such as Hiram Walker (UK), Allied Domecq (UK), and other wine manufacturers from Russia, France, China etc. See table 2.

## 3. Alcohol Consumption in Vietnam:

With a population of 75 million people and the estimated annual output of 264,192,000 litres (figure of 1997), the annual alcohol consumption per capita in Vietnam is 3.52 litres per person per year.

The "home-made" alcohol is popular in the countryside, while other local alcohol is widely consumed in the cities / towns. The imported alcohol is only used by a small minority of higher income-people in bigger cities. See table 3 and table 4.

## 4. How the drinks industry targets the youth in Vietnam

The advertisement of alcohol (together with tobacco) is prohibited in Vietnam. Therefore, alcohol producers and importers in Vietnam use several other ways to make their products known by the public, especially the young people. They normally send promotional staffs to public places where young people frequent like discotheques, bars and restaurants etc to introduce their products. They also distribute some give-away items like paper saucers etc.

## 5. Conclusion:

With a population of almost 80 million people, Vietnam is considered a potential market for consumer goods, including alcohol. However, the alcohol industry faces the following obstacles to the expansion of its market share in Vietnam:

- Ban of advertising
- Subject to high import tax (150 per cent),

and special consumption tax (from 15 per cent to 70 per cent depending on type of alcohol)

- Abundance of the cheap "home-made" alcohol
- Moreover, so far no comprehensive survey of the alcohol market has been made to guide a healthy strategy for alcohol production and consumption in Vietnam.

From Vinastas's (Vietnam Standardization and Consumers Association) point of view, we do not think consumption of alcohol should be widely encouraged. On the other hand, gradually reducing the "home-made" alcohol with its risk of poisoning to the consumers is necessary. The strictly controlled production and importation of alcohol is an alternative to the "home-made" alcohol. In this connection, VINASTAS would appreciate any assistance and supports from GAPA or other international organisations to carry out a comprehensive study on the alcohol consumption in Vietnam.

**Table 4 : Alcohol Import - 1997**

No.	Country	Volume (litres)	Value (USD)*
1	France	1,012,889	3,952,732
2	Singapore	210,214	3,162,247
3	Hong Kong	207,763	2,175,162
4	USA	124,981	1,463,087
5	Bulgaria	114,895	274,698
6	Australia	36,438	213,831
7	China	31,034	303,159
8	Japan	21,482	53,833
9	Indonesia	20,407	73,692
10	Sweden	20,000	32600
11	Others	90,331	580,050
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,890,434</b>	<b>12,285,091</b>

# South Korea

**Kuyng il Park, R.N., College of Nursing, Ewha Women's University, Seoul.**

The population of South Korea is about 47 million of which some 35 million are adults aged 15 years and over. Over 80 per cent of the population lives in urban areas.

The number of those in South Korea who consume alcohol is growing. The percentage of drinkers has increased from 55 per cent to 65 per cent during the last decade (Figure 1 (page 3 in PP)). In 1987, the number of drinkers overtook the number of non-drinkers.

During the last five years, whilst the number of male drinkers has stayed much the same, the number of the female drinkers has

increased by 3 per cent. This trend can be related with the increase of women working outside homes.

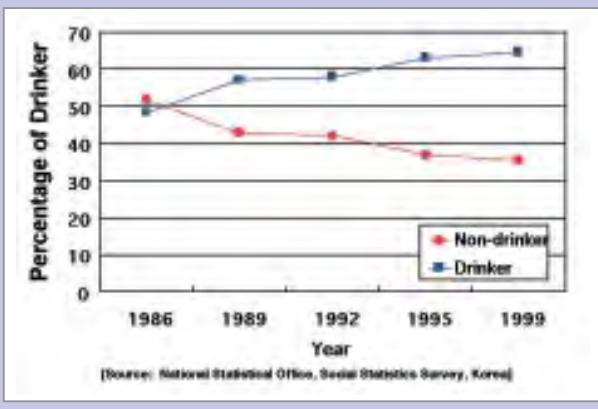
A slight increase in the age of the drinking population has taken place since 1995 in all the age groups apart from the 60+ (Figure 2). The percentages fall as age increases. In the age group 20-29 years old, about 75 per cent are drinkers. More drinking is



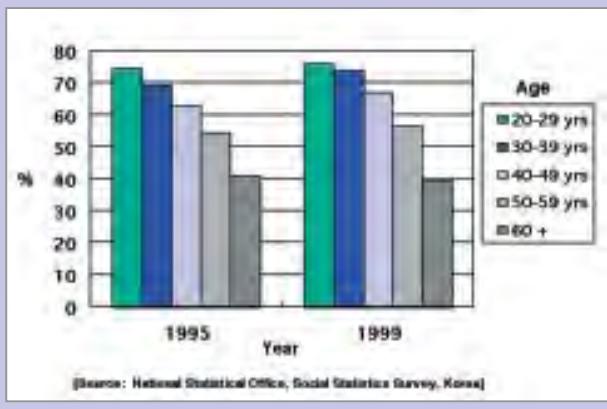
associated with a younger age and a higher level of education

The percentage of students, most of them aged 19 to 22, who drink is incredibly high at 96.4 per cent (Figure 3). There is very little difference between the sexes. The pictures shown are common scenes in Korean colleges. The freshmen are sharing alcohol with their peers while the older students cheer as they

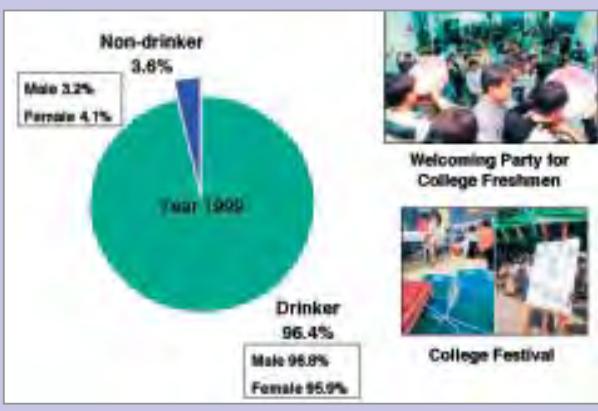
**Figure 1: Percentage of drinker**



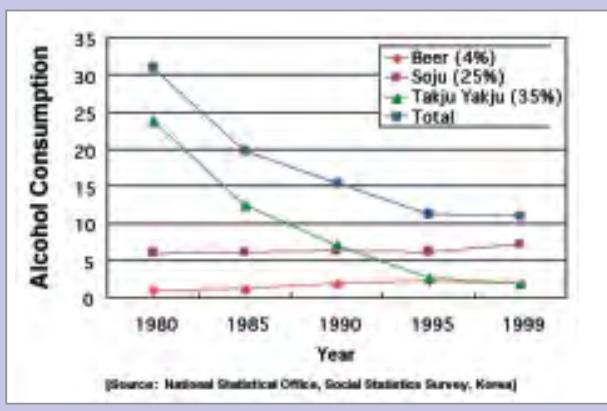
**Figure 2: Drinking adult population by age**



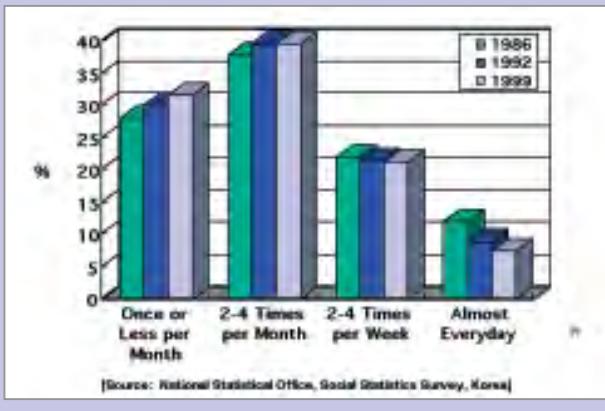
**Figure 3: Drinking population of students**



**Table 4: Per capita alcohol consumption**



**Table 5: Frequency of drinking**



watch their freshmen drink probably the first bottle in their lives. Although this tradition seems to be slowly fading out, it is still very popular and sudden deaths have been reported due to first-time heavy drinking. However, this kind of social tradition is generally accepted by most of students as a good way to build strong ties with their group and make friends.

The per capita alcohol consumption in Korea during the last twenty years is shown in Table 4. The consumption of beer and Soju (25 per cent alcohol) has increased slightly. However, consumption of the stronger, 35 per cent alcohol, Takju Yakju dropped drastically in the last twenty years. This had the effect that the total 100 per cent pure alcohol consumption in Korea dropped very considerably. This is mainly due to the decrease in spending on stronger and more expensive alcoholic drinks. The drinking population increases, but it consumes drinks

with a lower alcohol content. Per capita consumption of alcohol in Korea remains one of the highest in the country-to-country comparisons.

The most common drinking occasions in South Korea are social meetings and family gatherings. After them come happy events and personal stress. According to the data, drinking occasions at family gatherings increased drastically compared with other social events. At almost all social meetings in Korea alcohol is served and drunk.

Drinking habits have changed slightly in the last 15 years. The "Once or less per month" category increases and "almost every day" category has decreased (Table 5).

**Advertising posters for Soju**



### **Beer:**

This is an advertising poster for one Korean beer. The marketing policy of beer seems not changed during the last half century.

### **Soju:**

This advertisement for traditional alcohol, Soju focus their marketing on a woman of pure image. The female drinking population has increased drastically! This different brand of traditional alcohol, Soju advertises its image of purity with naked partygoers.

### **Football World Cup**

This advertisement with a local sports star relates beer with World-cup 2002 which will be held in Korea and Japan.

### **Advertisements**

The alcohol industry methods of advertising are as aggressive and all-pervasive in South Korea as in other countries in Asia.

**Advertising posters for beer**



**Advertising posters for Soju**





## **Global Alcohol Policy Alliance**

### **Contacts**

**Published by The Global Alcohol Policy Alliance**

**Alliance House  
12 Caxton Street  
London SW1H 0QS  
United Kingdom  
Tel: 020 7222 4001  
Fax: 020 7799 2510  
Email: [gapa@ias.org.uk](mailto:gapa@ias.org.uk)**

**11710 Beltsville Drive  
Suite 300  
Calverton  
MD 20705**

**United States of America  
Tel: (301) 586 9200  
Email: [gapa@alcohol-alliance.org](mailto:gapa@alcohol-alliance.org)**