

Consultation on “Mechanism towards the National Alcohol Policy Development”
Phnom Penh, January 27, 2014

Chief Committee aids remarks:

- The development of an alcohol policy is aimed at preventing violence, communicable and non-communicable diseases and traffic accidents caused by drinking.
- Alcohol is not only dangerous to social wellbeing but also to the public health
- Thailand, Laos and Vietnam are also in the process of drafting alcohol policies
- Timeline of Alcohol policy development
- The workshop is possible due to the high commitment from IOGT, PDP and the action for health Cambodia.
- Need to examine the feasibility of developing an alcohol policy in order to reduce harm caused from alcohol

Mr. John, Executive Director of IOGT:

- Cambodia has had 2-8 years of struggling towards a national alcohol policy and IOGT has been trying to give support when it comes to public health and the wellbeing of people in civil society.
- Examples of bans working: In Ireland, which has a strong pub culture smoking, was successfully banned from inside pubs and restaurants. The same kind of ban can be applied to alcohol in Cambodia by increasing taxes, limiting its availability and limiting how companies can advertise.
- Cambodia has shown its commitment to fix the problem and he is hopeful that Cambodia can pass an alcohol policy into law and then implement it successfully. A law is not enough to fix the problem, it needs to be implemented and monitored otherwise it will fail.
- Alcohol has many medical consequences but we cannot overlook the societal problems such as domestic violence.
- An alcohol policy should be part of the ministry of trade, ministry of finance and the ministry of sport; it is up to all areas to implement these measures
- Thailand has shown the benefits of putting a tax on tobacco and alcohol and how the government can use that extra money to improve health and conduct related research
- Now is the time for Cambodia to take action and become an ASEAN leader on public health

Deputy Prime Minister to deliver the opening session:

- Need to find a line between ensuring economic growth, reducing poverty and improving people lives based on sustainability
- Alcohol causes many accidents but is popular both around the globe and in Cambodia, particularly with youths.
- The international community acknowledges the many negative impacts of alcohol consumption. For example, domestic violence, rape, debauchery, family and social insecurity, lack of job focus.

- Alcohol is a detriment to society and causes us to lose our morality, our job commitment and to lose our mental focus
- In Cambodia alcohol is successful in the economy, especially as tourism increases but it also has a negative effect on public health and society. Need to develop a policy that can be put into the national plan.
- There are 5 key areas
 1. Tax increases
 - Need to increase the taxes on alcohol and other poisoned substances as this will reduce people's ability to consume those substances
 2. Prohibition or restriction on alcohol advertisements
 - Emphasis on the removal of advertisements in prime time television
 3. Restriction of where you can purchase alcohol
 - Limit the purchase locations and require licenses to sell
 4. Age restriction
 - This would not violate universal human rights as it would produce a policy which would support the public wellbeing and improve the quality of life
 5. Education
 - The best way to understand the effects of alcohol and to reduce or stop consumption is to educate people

Give gifts and group photo

PHD specialist from Thailand

Power point: experience in establishing mechanism to develop alcohol policy in Thailand.

- From the Thai experience there are three key areas required
 1. Social Mobilization- Mobilization of civil society groups
 2. Political development- ThaiHealth
 3. Knowledge
- Why we need a mechanism to develop alcohol policy and law?
 1. Alcohol problems are more than just a health problem; it is also associated with social problems. This issue needs to be shared among ministries
- Alcohol problems are more than just a health problem; it is also associated with social problems. This issue needs to be shared among different ministries
- What the mechanism should look like?
 1. A specific agency
 - An agency responsible for alcohol control which monitors, enforces and develops policy
 2. Multi-sectoral structure
 - Those that drafted the Thai policy communicated with other civil society groups, lawyers, economists, media, and community groups. By working with many people when you pass the law there is less resistance
 3. Multi level

- The structures and mechanisms need to be at the national and local level

Question and Answers

- Alcohol causes harm to yourself and others so need to establish a way to monitor alcohol. Beer advertisements should be limited. Cambodia has the freest availability to alcohol. In countries such as Australia and the USA it is stricter.
- Deputy Director of National Management University
- Q: Do you think we can improve Khmer morality through the alcohol policy?
- The morality of Khmer society is declining and we have to stop being ignorant to it. There is an increase in traffic accidents, domestic violence, debauchery and more. Alcohol is also advertised everywhere (newspapers, TV and on streets) and inspires Cambodians to drink.
- President of Handicap international
- Q: What should we do today to improve the long-term situation?
- Q: In Thailand they have a specific agency. In Cambodia do we need a specific agency to manage the alcohol issue?
- All ages and genders use alcohol. We already have a law but we should define who can drink alcohol in order to reduce drinking. Suggest a limitation on how much men can drink and how much women can drink.
- Classify the different strengths of alcohol and have recommendations depending on the strength of the alcohol in order to manage binge drinking
- Ministry of Health
- Will the alcohol policy be different from the 5-year plan already set out or will it be the same?
- Institutions should consider creating more places for people to do exercise. People often drink to relieve stress and when they no longer do that we need a place they can go to relieve their stress. For example in other countries they have gymnastics.
- In advertisements when they toast they should cheer with a non-alcoholic drink rather than beer.
- Request that there should be a liquor ban on public streets
- Ministry of Business
- Like on cigarette packets there should be health warnings on beer bottles.
- There should also be a law against the consumption of alcohol in public, an age limitation, increase related taxes and create an inter ministry to consult of alcohol issues.
- Ministry of Interior
- Increase the fines for drink driving

- Monks
- Need to find a way to educate people on the problems of drinking. They are also concerned about the declining Khmer morality as women used to never drink alcohol now they often do.
- Mr John IOGT
 - Response to MoH: time to move beyond the 5 points to take a step forward
 - Need to combine legislation with education. Need evidence. Need the 5 points

Meeting results

- The ministry of health produced the 5-year strategic plan for 2013-2017 already and the Ministry of Interior issued many new rules for traffic management. The Ministry of Information issued limitations on advertisements but we are yet to know of its effects.
- Limit of advertisements in prime time TV.
 - In other countries advertisements start from 10pm. They encourage users to use more alcohol but they never show the effects of it.
- Khmer morality has reduced due to alcohol consumption

Work on the draft to send to the PM for approval

WHO representative

- Worldwide situation of alcohol. Physical, psychological, well being effects
- Can affect families, friends, co workers and families
- Alcohol is the 3rd largest risk factor for disease