

GLOBAL HANGOVER

– alcohol as an obstacle to development

Pierre Andersson

© Pierre Andersson and IOGT-NTO International Institute 2008.

Layout: Pierre Andersson

Cover photo: Pierre Andersson

Printed:

ISBN:

This book was financed by Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Sida. Responsibility for the content falls solely to the author.

Table of contents

Introduction	7
From pulque to Heineken	10
Power over one's life	17
The thirst for new markets	30
A global burden of disease.....	37
Alcohol and gender	42
Alcohol and HIV	49
No ordinary commodity	51
The alcohol industry as a lobbyist	55
WTO – a threat to alcohol policies	61
Looking to the future	64



Introduction

Why should anyone interested in global development issues care about alcohol? Having completed this book, my answer is simple: alcohol is an obstacle to development.

Why should anyone interested in global development issues care about alcohol? Having completed this book, my answer is simple: alcohol is an obstacle to development.

Naturally, this is true everywhere, though the problems are more pronounced in developing countries. Nations with weak economies and new, unstable democracies are poorly equipped to deal with the problems caused by alcohol at different levels of society.

“It is always easier to go to the pub or local beer hall to forget your worries rather than try to change your circumstances.”

This is the issue addressed in this book. How alcohol contributes to keeping people impoverished, how societal development and the health of the people are impaired and how the international alcohol industry cynically seeks new markets and greater profits by expanding in poor countries.

No protecting policy

Poor countries often lack alcohol policies to protect their nations and citizens from the aggressive marketing and sales tactics of the alcohol industry. People fall into addiction, with no social safety nets to catch them. The economic consequences are often disastrous – primarily for

the affected families but also, in the longer term, for the entire nation.

Alcohol has political consequences as well. It is always easier to go to the pub or local beer hall to forget your worries rather than try to change your circumstances. For centuries, alcohol has been used to pacify people. The slave traders did it, the colonial lords did, and the factory owners did it. In 17th and 18th century Europe, a system was employed whereby a share of workers' wages was paid in alcohol. This system was exported to places such as Africa and remained in use in some areas until quite recently.

A smaller world

Alcohol consumption the world over is becoming increasingly homogenous. Globalization has made the world a smaller place and our exposure to foreign countries and cultures is forever increasing. However, major differences still remain. In Bangladesh, for example, almost 90 percent of men and 97 percent of women never drink alcohol.¹ At the other end of the scale, we have countries like South Africa, where in certain population groups an estimated one-in-three men abuses alcohol.²

A few years ago, when the World Health Organization compiled the risk factors contributing to illness and premature mortality in the

“There are thousands of aid projects throughout the world that aim to fulfil these millennium goals. Sadly, the part played by alcohol is often overlooked”

world, alcohol was high on the list.³ Researchers assess that each year alcohol causes almost two million deaths in the world.

The situation is most alarming in developing countries on the road to improvement – where alcohol is at the top of the list of risk factors causing illness.

If we include the role played by alcohol in the spread of HIV, the picture is even bleaker. Alcohol impairs judgement, causing people to take greater risks. Fewer would engage in unsafe sex if they were sober. The HIV/AIDS problem is one of the greatest obstacles to development in the world today, and we can no longer turn a blind eye to the part played by alcohol in the spread of this disease.

1 Global Status Report on Alcohol. 2004. WHO.

2 Meel B L. 2006. Alcohol-Related Traumatic Deaths in Transki Region, South Africa. Internet Journal of Medical Update.

3 Global Burden of Disease. 2002. WHO.



PHOTO: CAMILLA ORJUELA

Towards the millenium goals

At the UN Millennium Summit of 2000, the countries of the world agreed to tackle poverty. Eight Millennium Development Goals were agreed upon, to be fulfilled by 2015. These included halving the numbers of people living on less than a dollar a day and those suffering from starvation. The goals also include combating HIV/AIDS, improving gender equality and empowering women.

Alcohol comes into play in all these areas. There are thousands of aid projects throughout the world that aim to fulfil these millennium goals. Sadly, the part played by alcohol is often overlooked. With this book I hope to show the consequences of alcohol in developing countries – and what we can do about them. ■

From pulque to Heineken

Alcohol has been a part of many cultures for a long time. It has often been used on different ceremonial occasions, governed by more or less strict rules and cultural restrictions. In many cases, colonialism eradicated such traditional drinking habits.

In the ancient Aztec Empire, which was located roughly where central Mexico is found today, alcohol was closely tied to religion. The most common drink was pulque,¹ which the Aztecs made from the sap of the maguëy cactus, with the resulting brew was considered a gift from the gods.

Pulque was drunk regularly, but only by priests and a small clique of the social elite. Some exceptions were made, including women who had just given birth and the old and the sick. The rest of the population had to content themselves with access to pulque on special occasions. Intoxication was out of the question until the age of 60.

New drinking culture followed colonialism

When the Spanish colonial power made its entry in the sixteenth century, Aztec drinking habits also suffered consequences. The local culture was bludgeoned beyond recognition, much of the political and religious leadership was murdered and the colonial lords began their ruthless exploitation of both human and natural resources.

¹ Helling, Stig. 1993. Rusets riddare.



When the elite disappeared, so did respect for the old traditions. Pulque became a commodity that anyone could make, sell and buy and consumption rose dramatically.

The Aztec experience is not unique. The same events unfolded in many colonized countries, in Africa in particular. The local culture, often restrictive of alcohol, was eradicated and replaced with a more liberal mindset. It was not uncommon for the colonialists to introduce their own drinking traditions and market their own alcoholic beverages to the local population.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to very old traditions related to alcohol. Previously, local types of beer were most popular, often brewed by the village women. The alcohol content was quite low and the shelf life short. Even if drinking was not as strictly regulated as among the Aztec, certain rules were followed. Copious amounts were consumed at parties, births, weddings and after the harvest, but outside such occasions drinking was almost non-existent. The village women had control over production, and thereby even over drinking.

This culture remains to some extent, but just as with the Aztecs, colonialism changed much. Social structures collapsed and new drinks and habits entered the country. History repeated itself.

Alcohol pacifies

During the colonial era, the authorities in Zimbabwe created beer halls, the first as early as 1911, and they served two purposes.² They provided places of entertainment for workers and generated income for the state. A 1994 editorial in Zimbabwe's Daily Gazette summarized the colonialists' creation as follows.

“By offering readily available beer halls as the only recreational venues ... the colonialists ensured that when African workers were not slaving away in the factories, they were in the beer halls drinking so heavily that they no longer cared about their wretched situation. Subsequently, the average African worker learned to work and to drink, with little else to consume his time.”

Today, Zimbabwean men are ranked among the heaviest drinkers on the planet. Many start drinking while still at school, and at university level students drink a great deal even by international comparison. In

² Jernigan, David H. 1997. På jakt efter nya marknader.

a comparison with students in the UK, more than twice as many students in Zimbabwe drink to intoxication three to seven times a week. In a survey of industrial workers in the Zimbabwean capital of Harare, 22 percent of respondents drink every day – in a culture where men almost always drink to excess.

Western sway remains

Colonial times may be in the past, but the Western World's influence over the drinking cultures of developing countries may be greater than ever. The global alcohol industry generates immense sales every year. The markets of Europe and the US are essentially saturated, and the alcohol industry is seeking new countries and new markets.

The West influences drinking habits in developing countries in other ways too. Tourism is on the increase and reaches new destination every year. Media are increasingly internationalized, the broadcasts of our TV stations increasingly homogenous. Aid workers travel to all corners of the globe, taking with them their drinking habits. It is not uncommon for aid workers to find themselves in circumstances – alone and sheltered from social norms – that cause them to increase their alcohol consumption to levels considerably higher than at home.

For many people in developing countries, the American or European lifestyle becomes a dream and a goal to be attained. The West's heavy alcohol consumption is just part of the package. ■



PHOTO : GIDEON MENDEL / CORBIS

“Young and women in Africa drinking more”

One effect of the disappearance of the traditional ways to drink alcohol in Southern Africa is that youths and women drink increasingly more.

“Binge drinking in particular is on the increase, often with terrible consequences,” says Neo Morojele, an alcohol researcher from South Africa.

Psychologist Neo Morojele researches alcohol issues at the Medical Research Council in Cape Town. Her research projects often concern youths, women and alcohol and cover large parts of Southern Africa. Neo says that a large part of the problem is the new drinking patterns that have emerged.

“Before the colonial era, drinking was almost exclusively reserved for ceremonial occasions,” she explains. “The drinks were brewed by the village women and were not particularly strong. Youths and pregnant women were not allowed to drink at all.”

Today, the situation in many parts of Southern Africa is very different. She takes Uganda as an example. The average Ugandan (age 15 and over) drinks almost 20 litres of pure alcohol a year, double the figure for many European countries.

“What’s more, really dangerous drinking, binge drinking to extreme intoxication, has increased dramatically. But it’s also important to remember that there are big differences. In Mauritania, for example, most people drink next to nothing.”

According to Neo, binge drinking is the norm among youngsters in, for example, South Africa.

“It’s becoming increasingly common. If 40 percent of youths drink, then an estimated 37 percent always binge drink, leading to severe intoxication.”

The links between alcohol and violence, traffic accidents and high-risk sexual behaviour are perfectly clear.

“More than half of those killed in traffic accidents are under the influence of alcohol. And in our research, we see a direct correlation between how much people drink and how often they are exposed to violence.”

Many young people drink so much that they need help quitting. Among those treated for alcoholism in South Africa, 22 percent are under 20. The corresponding figure in Zambia is 27 percent.

Women still drink less than men, though in some places women are closing the gap and binge drink increasingly often.

“Studies from Namibia show that women there drink almost as much as the men; the difference is very small. In other countries, differences remain, but if we look at the percentage of heavy drinkers, men and women are not so different.”

That alcohol contributes to poverty and is otherwise an obstacle to development in Southern Africa is, in Neo’s opinion, unequivocal. Neo wants improved alcohol policies from the authorities.

“But there are also other things we can do. We must improve people’s circumstances. The way people drink shouts desperation. We have areas where almost everyone is unemployed, but alcohol is always available and soon provides an escape from reality. And when people drink, their future hopes drop even lower. It’s important to remember that these problems work both ways.” ■



PHOTO: PIERRE ANDERSSON

Neo Morojele



Power over one's life

At the UN Millennium Summit of 2000, the leaders of the world agreed to tackle poverty. Eight Millennium Development Goals were agreed upon at the summit, to be fulfilled by 2015. One of these goals was to halve world poverty. Alcohol often worsens the circumstances of poverty, making it more difficult to break free.

When we speak of poverty, we often mean a lack of resources. Not having enough money, unable to feed the family, unable to afford clothes for the children and unable to send them to school. But poverty is also a lack of opportunities, goals and security.

If we ask the poor how they perceive their situation, they paint a

picture of powerlessness, vulnerability, dependence and degradation. Poverty is a multi-faceted problem.

The world is wealthier than it has ever been. Combating poverty is the foremost goal of the international community. And there are examples of success. Over the past 30 years, the average life expectancy in the world increased by 20 years and infant mortality was halved.

Parallel to this, more than 80 countries still had a lower per capita income in 2000 than in 1990 and at least 1.2 billion people are still trying to live on less than a dollar a day.

There are a number of mechanisms that contribute to poverty taking a hold and refusing to budge. The distribution of the world's material resources is, in principle, unfair, but the political will to redistribute this wealth is relatively weak.

There are inequities in the world trade system that often work to the detriment of poor countries. Many countries are burdened with enormous debt. Deep-root-

ed injustice fuels corruption and conflict, phenomena that often reinforce poverty. The list goes on. HIV, environmental pollution, natural disasters, population growth. All of these are external mechanisms that contribute to poverty.

There are also mechanisms that arise and proliferate among people. Ignorance and feelings of fear, degradation and resignation often lead to further powerlessness. Together with the external mechanisms, they lock people into a poverty trap.

Alcohol is a drug that affects the internal and external poverty mechanisms in various ways. It has a direct economic effect when men visit beer halls and drink a large share of their wages, or when they are so drunk or sick from drinking that they cannot work.

Alcohol also contributes to people losing control over their lives. Those in power have always very consciously used alcohol and other drugs to repress and control poor people. For the poor, alcohol can offer a form of escapism from that very same oppression. Escape from reality, but also escape from participation in both family life and society in general.

“Those in power have always very consciously used alcohol and other drugs to repress and control poor people”

The Norwegian aid worker

In the summer of 2006, a frustrated Norwegian aid worker sent an e-mail to Forut, a Norwegian aid organization that focuses on alcohol as an obstacle to development. The aid worker was involved in a project in Namibia, a country experiencing relatively positive development, but also battling with major problems. Unemployment is widespread, in some parts of the country reaching levels of almost 70 percent, and a fifth of the population is HIV positive. However, the source of his frustration was something else: the major problems caused by alcohol.

“Alcohol halts development”

Things had worsened to such an extent that the Norwegian aid worker and his colleagues doubted whether they should pay their local staff in cash. At the same time, he did not want to pay the staff in food or goods as in effect he would declare the employees incapable of managing their own affairs.

“Around payday, no work is done as so many people are intoxicated. Car accidents, fights, rapes and so on are commonplace – not surprisingly alcohol plays a major role. I could go on. Alcohol abuse is one of the most significant factors in halting development, in personal and societal failures and in the demoralization and pacification of entire ethnic groups.”

The project had access to social anthropologists and educationalists, and many of those working there had extensive experience from various development projects. The focus was on the obvious – improving the education system, combating corruption, ensuring access to clean water. Despite some progress, they were extremely frustrated.

“Progress is of little use when the problem is that far too many of the people entrusted with managing the system have drinking problems. ... It’s about the traditional use of alcohol (from a time when alcoholic beverages were weaker and less available) and it’s about male honour and status (a real man doesn’t drink soft drinks – a real man drinks beer), it’s about desperation and escapism.” ■

Alcohol part of a culture of poverty

Velu and Chaminda are sitting in a bar at the railway station in Pettah, Sri Lanka and really ought to be heading home to their families. Instead, they remain, hour after hour, drink after drink.

“It is alright if we get home late. We have terrible economic problems, and it is impossible to get out of this on our salaries,” they say. “We might as well spend what we get for today’s fun and see what happens tomorrow. Tomorrow is going to be terrible anyway.”

Velu and Chaminda are not alone. Their example is taken from a report on alcohol and poverty in Sri Lanka that shows that almost one-in-ten poor men spend all, or even more than all, their wages on alcohol.

Temporary escape from a seemingly hopeless situation is one of the explanations of this behaviour. According to the researchers publishing the report, alcohol has become part of a culture of poverty. Even families that do not really want to spend money on alcohol are pressurized into organizing huge parties with large amounts of alcohol for weddings, funerals and first menstruation celebrations. The festivities are expensive and it is easy for families to become indebted without the ability to repay.

Getting others to pay for drinking

Jayantha drives a three-wheeler taxi in Colombo. His daughter recently reached the age at which she is considered a woman and all around him – neighbours, relatives, friends and workmates – expect him to organize a large party.

“If I said I was not having a party, the others would have said that they would organize it for my daughter, so there would have been a party whether I wanted it or not and my daughter would have been ashamed. I have no chance of refusing.”

Alcohol has become a part of a culture in which poor people control each other out of jealousy. No one is allowed to improve themselves, to get above the others, and those who drink a good deal of alcohol manage to involve others and get them to pay for their drinking.

“I don’t know how it happens,” says another man who, like Jayantha, drives a three-wheeler. “But the others don’t let me save. They make sure that I spend on the same things that they waste their money on.”

When wages are spent on drink

At the tea plantation in Matale, Sri Lanka, three-quarters of the men used to frequent the bar each day after work. By the time they left, half the day's wages had gone on drink. Here, problems with alcohol were taken into account in efforts to combat poverty and the situation has improved considerably.

Even if the rich of the world still drink the most, it is often the poor who suffer the most. The cost of alcohol creates holes in budgets that are already strained. Surveys¹ show that families in Romania spend an

“In the poor suburbs of Colombo, Sri Lanka, 30 percent of families state that they spend a third of their income on alcohol”

average of 11 percent of their total income on alcohol. The corresponding figure in Zimbabwe is 7 percent.

These averages, however, conceal the effects of alcohol on families where the men drink heavily. Families in Delhi, India with fathers who are heavy drinkers spend 24 percent of their income on alcohol. The average among other families in the same city is 2 percent. In the poor suburbs of Colombo, Sri Lanka, 30 percent of families state that they spend a third of their income on alcohol.

“Unacceptable not to serve alcohol”

Alcohol can become a part of a culture of poverty that sees what little resources available spent on apparently completely unnecessary items. So says Diyanath Samarasinghe, an alcohol researcher in Sri Lanka.

Being poor often means living a porous life. An insight made by Diyanath Samarasinghe, who has closely worked with and studied the lives of poor families in various parts of Sri Lanka. The poorest live on top of one another, privacy is extremely limited and freedom of choice is seldom of a notable extent.

¹ Public health at a glance – Alcohol. 2003. World Bank.



Diyanath Samarasinghe

“Poverty can be created and maintained socially,” he says. “Circumstances are most often such that one has no choice, it’s not possible to deviate and be too different.”

Diyanath uses wedding celebrations as an example. Failing to serve large quantities of alcohol is socially unacceptable in the extreme, even if it means borrowing large sums of money to finance, sometimes with fateful consequences as a result.

“Many families end up with debts they can never hope to repay. But as outsiders we cannot accuse them of being stupid for spending so much on alcohol. The entire culture and collective must change if it’s to work.”

Changing the culture and behavioural patterns of a collective is not easy. It is a long, drawn-out process.

“A little push from outside is often needed to start the process. Knowledge and understanding are established quickly among some individuals, more slowly among others, but it’s always a question of waiting for the majority.”

Diyanath is both worried and upset by the alcohol industry’s aggressive tactics in Sri Lanka.

“We still have quite large groups that don’t drink any alcohol. The industry’s strategy is quite clearly to get them to at least start drinking something, to get them to side with the drinkers. Women are definitely an important target group in this marketing.”

In recent times, increasing numbers of low-alcohol drinks, both beers and sweetened alcoholic mixers, have appeared on the market. What’s more, Diyanath has noticed alcohol appearing all the more often on TV.

“It’s not a coincidence,” he says. “Placing alcohol in soap operas and other television programmes is quite simply a subtle form of marketing to reach new groups.” ■

UTILITES

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

CASTLE LAGER

AFRICA'S FINEST

NOT FOR SALE TO PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

CLEARCHANNEL



The thirst for new mar- kets

The alcohol industry has a problem: the traditional sizeable markets of the northern hemisphere, Western Europe and North America, are saturated. As a result, the past couple of decades have seen the industry invest heavily in finding new markets, especially in poor countries.

The US and Western Europe can no longer satisfy the industry's continual demands for growth. It is quite simply impossible to sell more alcohol in these markets. There are many reasons. First, we already drink most in the world, and second, more and more people are realizing that this leads to problems. Country after country has started introducing tougher restrictions, higher taxes and prohibitions on the advertising of alcohol.

“Places where alcohol consumption is still low and where there are seldom restrictions on the sale or marketing of alcohol”

So, what can they do? The alcohol industry's solution has been to find new, promising markets and in the hunt for growth their hopes

have been set on developing countries. Places where alcohol consumption is still low (compared to Western levels) and where there are seldom restrictions on the sale or marketing of alcohol.

Naturally, any nation with strong growth and a growing middle class is of special interest. The BRIC nations, the growing giant economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China, are perfect for the alcohol industry's initiatives, though even the poorest countries of the world show promise.

Global alcohol conglomerates taking over

Of course, alcohol was already available in developing countries before Absolut, Heineken, Tiger, Smirnoff and Carlsberg appeared on the shelves of bars and stores.

“The ten largest companies are producing 58 percent of the world's spirits”

Previously, local types of alcoholic beverage were drunk most, often with low alcohol content. Today, the local breweries are often taken over or driven out of business by major international breweries. This is intentional and part of the alcohol industry's strategy to continue its growth and expansion into new markets. The small-scale systems that helped contribute to the local economy have all but disappeared. Much of the production, even of traditional drinks, has been industrialized and the profits reaped by the major global players.

This trend has accelerated the past two decades. The alcohol giants are now found throughout the world. Companies buy each other out or merge and the beer and the spirits markets have both been heavily consolidated, leaving just a handful of giants controlling almost all brands.

In 1989, the five largest breweries controlled 17 percent of the world market. Fifteen years later, the big five had increased their market share to almost 50 percent.

The spirits market has undergone a similar transformation, with the ten largest companies producing 58 percent of the world's spirits.¹

¹ Bakke, Øystein. 2006. Promising new markets. *The Promise of Youth*.



PHOTO: TORSEL EDENBORG

Facts: Growing markets

- The beer market in China is worth about 12 billion USD a year and is expected to show annual growth of at least five percent.
- Carlsberg is one of the companies investing heavily in China, marketing its own brand name as well as investing in local breweries and beer brands.
- Swedish Vin & Sprit has also moved into the Chinese market. In 2007, together with one of China's largest producers of bai-jiu, an alcoholic beverage distilled from rice or other grain and the world's most sold spirit, Vin & Sprit founded a joint-venture company with a focus on the 'luxury' segment.²
- The beer market in India is still smaller than that of China, but is expanding faster. Between 2007 and 2011, alcohol industry analysts expect the market to grow by more than 17 percent a year. The market is dominated by United Breweries and SABMiller, though competitors Anheuser-Busch, Carlsberg and InBev are also flexing their muscles in the fight to win consumer favour.

2 'Vin & Sprit in i Kina.' Dagens Nyheter, 5 June 2007.

Carlsberg can fulfil your dreams

Danish brewery giant Carlsberg has used very aggressive marketing in developing countries the world over for many years. As a part of its efforts to reach young people, the brewery has established ‘task forces’ comprised of young, career-minded Carlsberg trainee programme candidates. When Carlsberg sponsors music or sports events, a task force is in attendance. The young men and women, sometimes blond Scandinavians, mingle, smile, chat and serve free beer. A beach party may be arranged in Sri Lanka, with a game of rugby in the sand followed by a fun beer relay race.

Selling an image

There are plenty of examples of how many companies selling alcohol in developing countries use lifestyle advertising. The alcohol is linked to wealth, success, beauty and happiness.

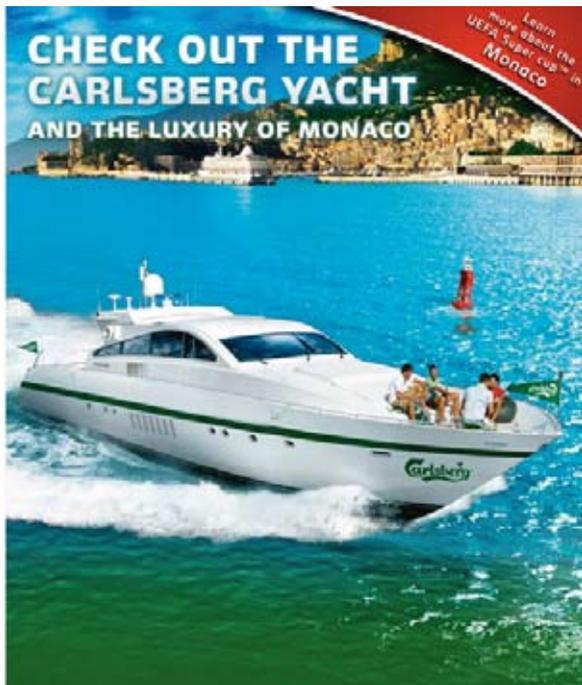
A representative of Asian Pacific Brewers, a company that is largely owned by Heineken and controls large shares of the beer market in Southeast Asia, is quoted as saying:³

“A beer is a beer is a beer. It may be less cloudy than it was 2,000 years ago... But there’s not much you can do with beer, as everything is 6,000 years old. That’s why it’s all about branding... A brand is like a person. How do we make this product as attractive as possible? We don’t sell beer, we sell an image.”

Luxury, success and wealth in Malawi

The Carlsberg website features a story about the brewery’s first investment in Africa. A public servant from the Danish Foreign Office visited Malawi in 1967 and longed desperately for the clear, light-coloured beer he was used to back home. One thing led to another, and the following year Carlsberg opened its first overseas brewery in, that’s right, Malawi. The company is still the majority-owner of Carlsberg Malawi Brewery Ltd – a brewery that has a roughly 97 percent share of the domestic market for ‘clear’ beer.

³ Jernigan, David H. 1997. På jakt efter nya marknader.



Selling an image. A picture from Carlsberg's 2007 campaign. An earlier campaign in Malawi included a lottery in which beer drinkers could win trips on a private jet.

Malawi is one of the poorest nations in the world. According to the UNDP, 41 percent of the country's population live below the poverty line, surviving on less than a dollar a day. According to the country's own calculations, large groups live on considerably less.

Alcohol advertising in Malawi is often based on associating the brand with luxury, wealth and success. Carlsberg recently organized a competition in Malawi with a desirable first prize:⁴

"Imagine having a private jet at your disposal that could take you anywhere in the world on an all expenses paid, seven-day vacation with seven of your friends. Tokyo, Sidney, Rio – anywhere."

Anyone wanting to participate in the lottery had to send in small plastic tags fastened to the inside of the bottle tops. Each plastic tag counted as a ticket in the huge lottery. The man who won, a parts foreman at a car repair shop, had collected more than a thousand tickets together with his friends.

The lottery was marketed on a massive scale. In addition to billboards and standard TV adverts, Carlsberg managed to turn the entire competition into a media event. Over the space of a few weeks, the

4 Midthun, Ingvar. 2006. The Promise of Youth.

draws were presented in a series of TV shows, showing people partying and drinking bottles of Carlsberg on prime time TV. The message was clear: “Carlsberg can fulfil your dreams.”

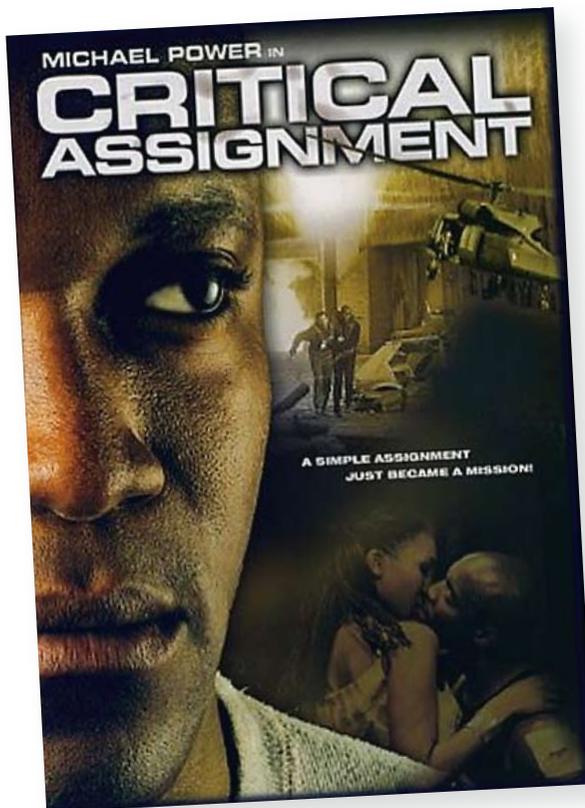
**SOS Children’s Villages:
“Alcohol root cause of many problems”**

Jeremy Sandbrook is national leader of the SOS Children’s Villages’ activities in Malawi. He tells Norwegian writer Ingvar Midthun of the links between alcohol and poverty in the country.

“Our children are coming from such extreme poverty that I cannot say that alcohol is the direct reason they are here. Nevertheless there is no doubt that it is precisely alcohol that is a contributing factor to many of the social problems this country is facing. Often it’s the women’s incomes that save the families; many men spend large parts of their income on alcohol.”

There is little focus on moderation and this leads to extensive drinking, Jeremy explains.

“This again leads to less safe sex where more and more people become HIV infected. As in many other countries it is also the case that domestic violence is directly linked to alcohol consumption. Since the whole subject is shameful and taboo, it receives much too little attention.” ■



Guinness and the legend of Michael Power

The Guinness brand is owned by Diageo, one of the world's largest alcohol producers, and sells most in Ireland and the UK. Guinness has its third largest market in Nigeria – the result of aggressive marketing.

Nigeria is also one of the fastest growing markets – in 2003 sales of Guinness in Nigeria increased by ten percent while the rest of the market increased by just two percent.

According to David Armstrong, Head of Marketing at Diageo in Africa, this increase is due to a successful advertising campaign.⁵ The

⁵ Jernigan, David H and Obot, Isidore. 2006. Thirsting for the African market, African Journal of Drug & Alcohol

campaign, devised by advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi, is based around Michael Power, a well-known character in Nigeria. Power is a fictional character played by an actor from the US (his real name is a closely guarded secret) and he has been promoted by Diageo on billboards, in magazines and on radio and TV as a spokesperson for Guinness. In many cases, neither the media nor the general public realized that Michel Power was a fictional character and Diageo and the ad agency have done their best to keep this misconception alive.⁶

The name Michel Power was not chosen arbitrarily. In Nigeria, Guinness has long been associated with strength, sexual virility and power, and the name is intended to reinforce this image. Even before Michael Power entered the arena, consumers had nicknames for Guinness such as black power and Viagra.

“The series included plenty of opportunities for the company to reinforce the links between Guinness and the characteristics they wanted to be associated with: strength, friendship and intelligence”

In 1999, Diageo launched a campaign the likes of which are seldom seen, centred on the character of Michael Power. Instead of using traditional marketing ploys with advertisements and sales messages, Power was transformed into a hero, the star of a drama series broadcast on radio and TV. The series included plenty of opportunities for the company to reinforce the links between Guinness and the characteristics they wanted to be associated with: strength, friendship and intelligence. The recurring catch phrase was “Guinness brings out the power in you”.

After a few years, they took the next step. In 2003, Diageo released *Critical Assignment*, a motion picture with Michael Power in the lead role, promoted as an African James Bond. The film was distributed in much of Africa and was shown in cinemas, mobile cinemas and assembly halls. For many people, *Critical Assignment* was the first film they saw on the big screen. Diageo offered the drama series and the film free of charge as part of the company’s investment in establishing the Guinness brand on the African continent.

In 2003, Diageo invested almost SEK 300 million in marketing in Africa. ■

Studies, 5/2006.

⁶ Michael Power. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Power_%28Guinness_character%29 (2007-04-31)



FOTO: NILE SPRAGUE

The beer girls of Cambodia

If you take an evening walk in Phnom Penh, Siam Reap or Sihanoukville, you cannot miss them. At every bar and in many restaurants, the young, beautiful women dressed in clinging, often short dresses prominently marked with a beer brand.

There are the Heineken girls, the Tiger girls and the ones with the short Stella Artois skirts. They are there for one simple reason: to sell beer to male customers. They often live on commission. Each crate of beer sold, about eight litres, pays three or four dollars. The average income among beer girls is 55 dollars a month, an amount that they often not only have to support themselves, but even use to help their families back home.

To sell a lot of beer, the young women have to be nice to customers, no matter how badly they are treated. Violence and harassment are commonplace.

Some girls are also known to have sex with customers in exchange for money. There are about 20,000 beer girls in Cambodia. Surveys show that more than 20 percent of them are HIV positive.⁷

Campaign to improve conditions

The breweries have been heavily criticized for the beer girl system and have promised to improve matters. A couple of brands have introduced longer skirts and a salary system that is only partly based on commission. Reacting to the criticism, Carlsberg has stopped using beer girls to market its products in Cambodia, but still owns Holsten and 50 percent of the local beer Angkor, both of which still use beer girls as a sales tactic. Otherwise, not much has changed; beer girls are

still a common sight at Cambodia's restaurants and bars.

“I’ve spoken to women in the past 24 hours who’ve had guns held at their heads to force them to drink at tables with men”

Sharan Burrow, president of ACTU, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, tells Australian ABC News

that they have launched a campaign to create better working conditions for Cambodia's beer girls.⁸

“I’ve spoken to women in the past 24 hours who’ve had guns held at their heads to force them to drink at tables with men. This is a story of a global set of exploitation that must end.”

She explains that the international beer companies avoid responsibility by not employing the girls directly. Officially, the girls are employed by the bar owner, enabling the breweries to brush aside responsibility for employment and working environment conditions.

“When you’ve got major corporations around the world, the beer companies that make massive profits, refusing to employ Cambodian women, allowing them to be abused, maltreated, open to sexual exploitation and abuse, even rape, then this is a shocking story.”

7 Lubek, Ian. Confronting HIV/AIDS and alcohol in Cambodia. <http://www.fmg.uva.nl> (2007-04-30).

8 ACTU looks to help Asian beer sales girls, ABC News, 27 May 2006.

Same method in other countries

Beer girls have been used to sell alcohol in Cambodia for almost ten years. As far as the major international breweries are concerned, it's a successful sales method that they've chosen to adopt in other countries.

“Many well-known beer brands are now aggressively expanding their markets into China using similar marketing strategies,” says Sharan. “Heineken is reported to already have 1,200 beer girls operating in China. The price that young women are paying for helping big beer companies grow market share is far too high.” ■

Major brewers

Anheuser-Busch

Brands: Budweiser, Bud Light, Bud Ice, Busch.

World's largest in terms of sales.

Strategic markets: North and South America and China.

Inbev

Brands: Stella Artois, Brahma, Becks, Skol.

Formed through the merging of Interbrew (Belgium) and Ambev (Canada). World's largest in terms of sales volumes.

Strategic markets: Latin America, Europe, Russia and rest of Eastern Europe, China, parts of Africa.

SABMiller

Brands: Miller Genuine Draft, Castle Lager.

Formed when South African Breweries bought Miller Beer from tobacco company Philip Morris. Represented in more than 40 countries.

Strategic markets: US, Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, China and India.

Heineken

Brands: Heineken, Amstel, Tiger, Cruzcampo

Claims to be the beer brand sold in the most countries (160) in the world. The largest shareholder in Asian Pacific Breweries and controls brands such as Tiger and Anchor.

Strategic markets: Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, India, Africa, Middle East.

Carlsberg

Brands: Carlsberg, Tuborg, Pripps, Ringnes, Holsten.

A couple of years ago, Carlsberg/Tuborg merged with Pripps/Ringnes.

Strategic markets: Russia and rest of Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, China.

Major distillers

Pernod Ricard Groupe

Brands: Chivas Regal, Jameson, Ballantine's, Martell, Jameson, Havana Club, 100 Pipers, Malibu.

Aggressive takeovers (including Allied Domecq and parts of Seagram) have made Pernod Ricard Groupe the world's largest distiller.

Diageo

Brands: Guinness (beer), Smirnoff, Johnnie Walker, Baileys, J&B, Gordon's, Captain Morgan and more.

Former world's largest distiller. Formed by the merging of Grand Metropolitan, Guinness, United Distillers and Vintners in 1997.

60 percent stake in Seagram since 2001. Active in 180 countries.

UB Group

Brands: Kingfisher (beer), Bagpiper Whisky, McDowell Whisky.

India's largest brewer and distiller. Recently bought competitor Shaw Wallace, which was India's second largest distiller. Also owns Kingfisher Airlines.

Bacardi

Brands: Bacardi, Bombay Sapphire, Dewar's, Castillo, Eristoff.

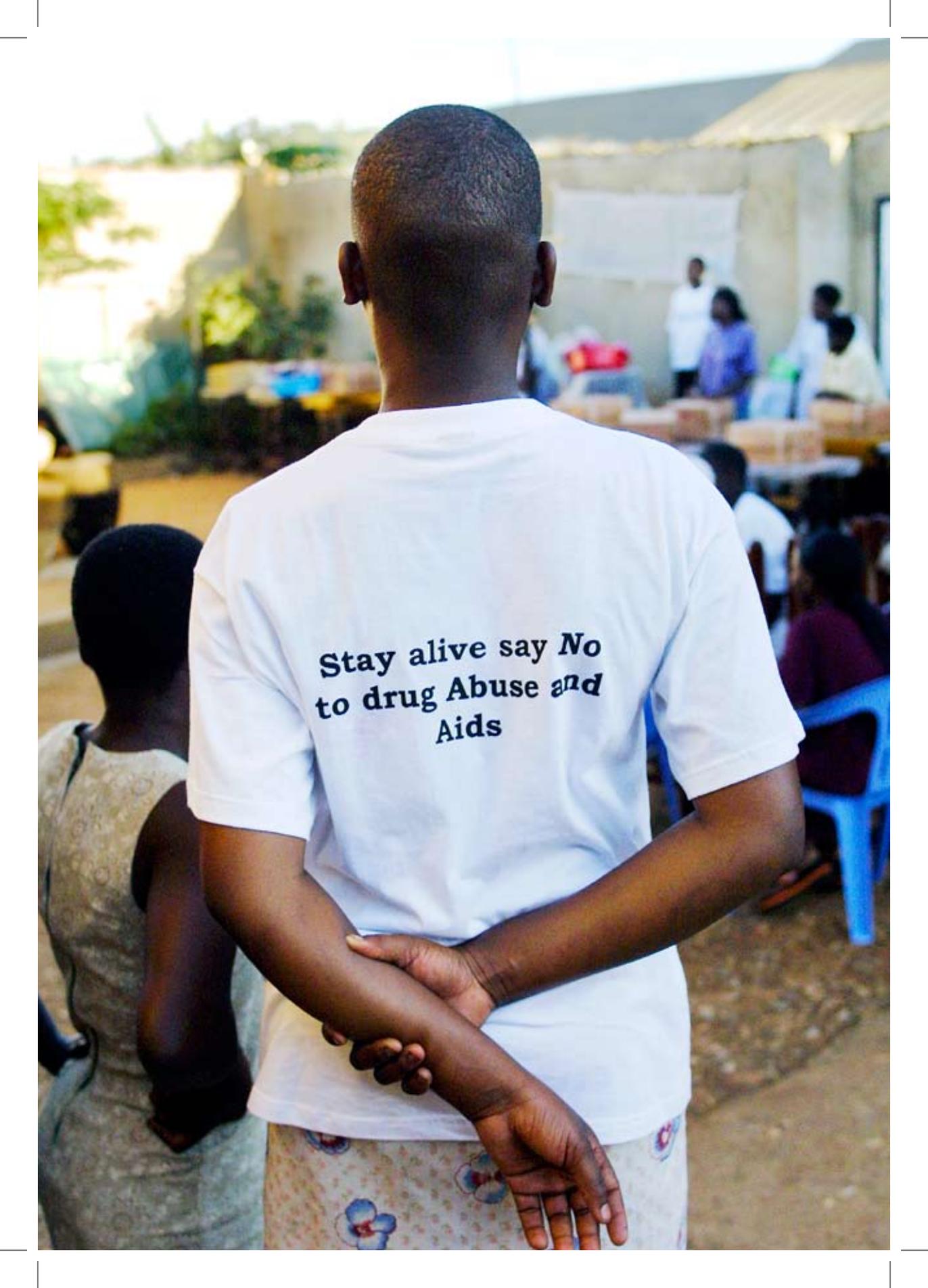
The company is active in 170 countries. North America is the core market, with growth in Latin America, Africa and Middle East.

Vin & Sprit AB

Brands: Absolut, Danzka, Plymouth Gin.

The Swedish state-owned distiller has long enjoyed extensive sales success in North America. Will be sold to private market during 2008. Growth in Latin America and Asia.

Sources:
The Promise of Youth, Ingvar Midthun
Euromonitor, concerned corporate websites

A photograph taken from behind a man with short-cropped hair, wearing a white t-shirt. The t-shirt has the text "Stay alive say No to drug Abuse and Aids" printed on the back in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The man's arms are crossed behind his back. He is standing in an outdoor setting, possibly a community event or market, with other people and buildings visible in the background. The lighting suggests it might be late afternoon or early morning. To the left, the back of another person's head and shoulder is visible. In the background, there are people sitting at tables, some under a white canopy, and buildings with corrugated metal roofs.

**Stay alive say No
to drug Abuse and
Aids**

A global burden of disease

Poor countries experiencing dramatic growth in their economies are also witnessing upwardly-spiralling alcohol consumption. In the wake of these changes, we see increased mortality due to alcohol. In some parts of the world, alcohol is the risk factor contributing most to the overall healthcare burden.

Almost 80 million people throughout the world have one or more disorders caused by alcohol. Many times this number suffer from problems where alcohol is a strong contributing factor: accidents, violence and sexually transmitted diseases are a few examples.

When the World Health Organization (WHO) studied the global burden of disease in the world in 2002, it concluded that alcohol was the root cause of almost two million deaths each year.¹ Alcohol causes about four percent of the total burden of disease in the world in terms of years lost due to disability or premature mortality.²

The difference between the sexes is large. Among men, alcohol represents 6.5 percent of the total burden of disease while the correspond-

1 The Global Burden of Disease. 2002. WHO.

2 To calculate the burden of disease, the researchers use the concept of Disability-Adjusted Life Years, or DALYs. The number of life years lost due to premature mortality is calculated, together with the number of years lost due to different forms of disability.

ing figure for women is 1.3 percent. The correlation to how men and women drink is readily apparent.

There are also major differences between different parts of the world. In Russia, alcohol is the root cause of more than 20 percent of the total burden of disease among men. Similar numbers are seen in parts of Central and South America.

Developing countries present two different pictures. Developing countries with high infant mortality rates exhibit a relatively low proportion of deaths and disease caused by alcohol. Instead, the major causes are malnutrition, unsafe sex and polluted water. Moreover, alcohol consumption is often low in these countries.

If, however, we look to developing countries with low infant mortality rates, we see a different picture altogether. These are often countries with strongly expanding economies and increasing alcohol consumption (China, Brazil, Thailand and South Korea are a few examples). In these countries, alcohol tops the list of risk factors causing disease and premature mortality. High blood pressure comes in second and tobacco, often considered considerably more harmful than alcohol, appears third on the list.

Economic and social harm not considered

Alcohol also causes harm of a non-medical nature. Such harm is not included in the aforementioned WHO study. Assessing the extent of social harm (addiction, children growing up with addict parents, criminality etc.) in which alcohol plays a decisive role is difficult. No extensive research is conducted in the field, although estimates have been made showing that the harm caused by alcohol is twice as high if the social consequences are included.³

Nor does the WHO study encompass the economic consequences of alcohol. The direct effects are easy to see when the men of poor families spend a greater part of their income on alcohol, but the effects on society are more complex.

There are estimates of how much alcohol costs society. The results vary greatly depending on the calculation method, though all show very high costs.

An EU report⁴ calculates the direct costs of alcohol in the EU to be

³ Rehm et al. Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries, chapter 47.

⁴ Alcohol in Europe. 2006. European Commission.

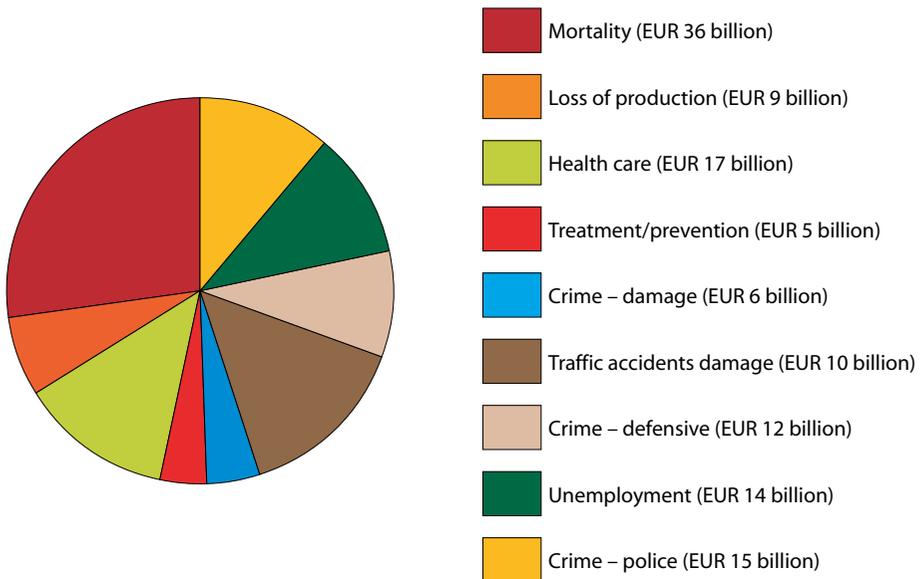
The twelve most significant risk factors:

	Developing countries with high infant mortality	Developing countries with low infant mortality	Industrial countries
1	Underweight	Alcohol	Tobacco
2	Unsafe sex	Blood pressure	Blood pressure
3	Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene	Tobacco	Alcohol
4	Indoor smoke from solid fuels	Underweight	Cholesterol
5	Zinc deficiency	Overweight	Overweight
6	Iron deficiency	Cholesterol	Low fruit and vegetable intake
7	Vitamin A deficiency	Low fruit and vegetable intake	Physical inactivity
8	Blood pressure	Indoor smoke from solid fuels	Illicit drugs
9	Tobacco	Iron deficiency	Unsafe sex
10	Cholesterol	Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene	Iron deficiency
11	Alcohol	Unsafe sex	Lead exposure
12	Low fruit and vegetable intake	Lead exposure	Childhood sexual abuse

The twelve most significant risk factors affecting mortality and disease in different groups of countries.

(Source: World Health Report 2002)

EUR 125 billion a year. If indirect costs, such as psychosocial effects and suffering due to illness and criminality, are included, the estimate rises to EUR 270 billion a year.



World physicians' warning on alcohol

The World Medical Association's 2005 General Assembly in Santiago proposed far-reaching measures to reduce the global impact of alcohol on health. The proposal concludes, as did the WHO study, that alcohol is one of the largest risk factors for ill health and that alcohol can be directly linked to more than 60 different chronic and acute diseases.

The World Medical Association also underlines the problems caused by the alcohol industry's aggressive marketing and states that alcohol cannot be considered an ordinary commodity. The physicians' proposal includes, for instance, the following recommendations:

Learn from countries with successful alcohol policies, which often include age limits, restricted availability, high taxes and low prescribed blood alcohol levels for drivers. With minor modifications, such measures can also be used in developing countries.

Be aware of and counter the alcohol industry's proposals for alternative, unproven measures to control alcohol policies.

Limit the opportunities to market alcohol to the young and appoint independent supervisory authorities to monitor whether the alcohol industry truly follows the ethical guidelines it sets up.

Alcohol and violence

There is clearly a relation between alcohol and violence. This relation manifests itself in several ways. Statistics show that increased sales of alcohol give rise to increases in violent crime. We also know that a large proportion of those committing violent crimes do so under the influence of alcohol. A study from the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden shows that about 60 percent of convicted violent criminals had consumed alcohol before committing their crimes and the risk of resorting to violence is 13 times greater if alcohol has been consumed.⁵

We do not know exactly why alcohol sometimes leads to violence, though there are several theories.⁶ One theory is that alcohol gives us reason to behave in ways we would not normally; an intoxicated individual is not considered fully responsible for his or her actions.

Another possible reason is that intoxication leads to reduced self-control. Experiments show that humans under the influence of alcohol are more likely to resort to violence in situations marked by stress and frustration. Yet another reason may be that alcohol causes people to experience conflicts as more frustrating and provocative than is normally the case.

Alcohol is seldom, if ever, the sole explanation for the use of violence, but it is strikingly often the triggering factor. ■

5 Haggård-Grann U, Hallqvist J, Långström N, Möller J. 2006. The role of alcohol and drugs in triggering criminal violence: a case-crossover study. *Addiction* (2006) 101:100-108.

6 Vilket samband har alkohol och våld? www.can.se (2007-04-30)

Alcohol, men and women

Alcohol has long been used as a method for reinforcing the roles of the sexes and increasing men's power at the cost of women's. The relation between alcohol and violence is clear.

Alcohol and men's violence against women

Alcohol often affects people other than the actual drinkers. Throughout the world, men drink the most, while women suffer a disproportionately large share of the harm. When the World Health Organization (WHO) interviewed 24,000 women on men's violence against women, the responses showed that this type of violence has clear links to alcohol.¹

Among the countries surveyed, the problems are most pronounced in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Peru and Bangladesh, where as many as 70 percent of the women state that they have been subjected to sexual or physical violence.

The link between violence and alcohol is clear. The relation can be seen among women who abuse alcohol themselves, women who work in environments associated with large quantities of alcohol and women with partners who drink. Four out of five women who are subjected to violence have been assaulted at home by their partners.

One of the questions asked in the interviews was whether it is okay to say no to sex with your partner if he is intoxicated. The answers differ between countries. In Brazil, almost all respondents consider this a valid reason, while only 35 percent of the women in Tanzania would dare to say no if their partners had been drinking heavily. This is a country where almost one-in-ten adults is HIV-positive².

1 Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. 2005. WHO.

2 Tanzania Country Profile. 2006. UNAIDS.

Why do men drink more than women?

Men drink more than women and men cause more alcohol-related problems than women. Generally speaking, this is the situation in all parts of the world, and it has probably been so for a very long time. Physical differences between the sexes are probably part of the underlying explanation – women have smaller bodies and the effects of alcohol are reached faster than in men.

The extent of the differences between men and women's drinking does, however, vary quite considerably between different parts of the world. Subsequently, physical differences are not the sole explanation; culture also comes into the equation.

Alcohol has long been used as a way to reinforce the roles of the sexes. A WHO study³ examining the differences between men and women's drinking in eight countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America indicates four explanations for the existence of different drinking habits:

Power. Alcohol both symbolizes and reinforces men's power in relation to women. Being able to drink the most is a sign of masculinity throughout the world. Alcohol also often becomes an excuse for violent behaviour and as such can be used to gain more power over others. Generally, alcohol causes men to become more violent than women. The study concludes that there is much to indicate that the expected effect weighs heavily.

Sex. The study also emphasizes the idea that men and women alike are drawn to the expectation that alcohol increases sexual prowess and pleasure. A widespread fear of female sexual liberation contributes to restrictions on women's drinking through different types of cultural and social control.

High-risk behaviour. A third possible explanation as to why men drink more than women is that men are more inclined to take risks. Here we also find cultural explanations – risk-taking is considered masculine.

Responsibility. It may also be the case that men and women react differently to the responsibilities they are expected to assume in different areas. Women are often considered to have most responsibility for children and the home and perhaps limit their alcohol consumption as a result. This is often strongly controlled socially, while for men drinking can be a way to avoid responsibility for the home.

³ Alcohol, gender and drinking problems – Perspectives from low and middle income countries. 2005. WHO.

Closing gap

In many parts of the world, the differences between how men and women drink are decreasing. This is partly the direct result of increased sexual equality and female liberation, but is also probably due to women comprising an attractive target group for the alcohol industry.

In India, 90 percent of the women drink very little or no alcohol. Change is underway, especially among the young, urban middle class. A letter to the editor published in India's Tribune newspaper summarizes the situation:

"The last three or four years we have seen an increase in alcohol abuse among women. Young yuppie women on the career ladder are affected by Western culture and aggressive TV marketing. Alcohol advertisements depict good-looking young men and women living grandiose lives and the major distillers sponsor huge events and parties with free drinks. Alcohol has become a way to gain entrance to the more fashionable circles."

After the tsunami

In the aftermath of the tsunami, which affected countries that included Sri Lanka, the first reports of violence against and the rape of women were received early. There was, however, inadequate documentation and it was difficult to get the authorities to take the matter seriously.

In a report published in the Swedish magazine *Ottar*⁴, journalist Andreas Stickler tells of a meeting with the police commissioner in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. According to the police commissioner, there are few problems of violence against women in the refugee camps. The report continues:

"However, Police Commissioner Bandara's truth is not everybody's truth. When we speak to organizations, aid workers and victims, another picture emerges: the biggest problem faced by women today is the men and their heavy drinking. The men who lost their homes, their jobs, members of their families and who spend the compensation they received from the state on drink. They sell soaps, cooking pots and other goods they received to earn money for spirits. And in their wake we find, of course, the women subjected to their violence, documented or not."

4 Stickler, Andreas. 2005. Efterdyning – kvinnors situation i Sri Lanka efter tsunamin. *Ottar*, issue 1/2005.



Christine Kyazike

“Special beer for special people”

Christine Kyazike is 19 years old and dreams of being a journalist and marrying a man who does not drink. A journalist because she is good at reporting what she sees around her – and a sober husband because she grew up in the shadow of alcohol.

Christine lives in Uganda, a country which, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), has the highest alcohol consumption in the world at 19.4 litres per person a year. As Uganda is also one of many countries lacking reliable research and statistics on alcohol, this

figure is not completely certain. There is, however, no doubt that in contrast to other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, consumption among Ugandan women is also high.

“Yes, women here drink,” says Christine. “There’s nothing else for them to do. They go out, have a few beers then go home and sleep. They drink quite simply to forget their problems for a while.”

Christine knows. Her mother is one of thousands of women in East Africa who earn a living by producing and selling alcohol. She runs a bar where Christine used to work as a waitress, even as a child. The bar brought in money and supported the family, but also caused problems. Nightly disagreements with customers refusing to pay made for an unsafe workplace for Christine and her mother.

“Most customers drank local spirits because they’re cheaper,” she explains. “But really they wanted the famous brands, the ones you see in the advertisements. Like Nile Special for special people.” Christine laughs, “Because that beer is sweeter to the taste.”

“The bar brought in money and supported the family, but also caused problems.”

Christine does not drink. She has seen the problems and is also a born-again Christian, meaning she must abstain from alcohol, she explains.

“People didn’t used to drink as much. My grandmother, for example, never drank. Today, people are more curious. They see the big advertisements and how others drink and they want to try themselves. And those who drink take new drinkers with them.”

A large proportion of the alcohol is produced in homes and local breweries. But the major brewers and distillers employ hardline marketing methods to encourage Ugandans to move over to ‘quality’ spirits and the capital Kampala is dominated by alcohol advertisements. Nile Special beer uses slogans such as ‘After a long day – you’ve earned it’, Smirnoff arranges music festivals for youngsters and Club Beer focuses on female consumers.

Christine no longer works in her mother’s bar, and is instead training to be a hairdresser. As a hairdresser, she can earn about USD 100 a month.

“I’ll work for a couple of years, until I have enough money to study to be a journalist. I think I’d be good at it,” she says candidly, “because I’m good at telling stories about things that have happened to me.” ■

Interview: Sara Sandberg



MWENGE

MUGANDA BAR



Alcohol and HIV

HIV and AIDS cause terrible suffering and comprise one of the greatest obstacles to development today. Alcohol plays a considerable role in the spread of the disease.

In 2006, almost 3 million people in the world died of AIDS. That same year, 4.3 million were infected with HIV. That's 12,000 people a day, or 500 people an hour. All in all, almost 40 million people are living with this deadly virus.¹

Developing countries are badly affected. There are 25 million infected people in sub-Saharan Africa, and another 8 million in South and Southeast Asia.

Today, we know that alcohol plays a key role in the spread of

HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases. Alcohol makes people more prone to take risks, contributes to men committing more rapes and even affects the physiological risk of spreading the disease as cells are made more susceptible to infection.

Studies from countries such as Laos, Malawi, Botswana and Uganda confirm that alcohol consumption leads to more people having more

“Today, we know that alcohol plays a key role in the spread of HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases.”

¹ Epidemic Update. 2006. UNAIDS.

sexual contact and more people having sex without condoms. The surveys often show direct correlations between how often and how much people drink and how often they practice unsafe sex.

Alcohol and prostitution

There is a clear link between drinking and visiting prostitutes among men. A survey from Botswana² shows that moderate drinkers are three times more likely to visit prostitutes than non-drinkers, while heavy drinkers are five times more likely to pay for sex. The study also shows that many of the women who turn to prostitution are heavy drinkers.

In rural areas of Malawi, many women make a living by producing traditional beers such as kachasu and masese. When the drought hits, there is a shortage of corn for making beer, and the women lose a large part of their income. Prostitution, exchanging sex for food and basic commodities, can offer a last, desperate recourse.³

Immune system weakened

Alcohol even affects the spread of HIV on a physiological level. Research shows that the immune system is weakened when drinking alcohol. The cells affected by alcohol run a three times greater risk of being infected by the HIV virus.⁴

The consumption of large quantities of alcohol can disrupt the production of T cells, which are of vital importance to the immune system. Research shows that the thymus, a gland located behind the breastbone, produces noticeably fewer T cells in conjunction with heavy alcohol intake.⁵

Researchers at Jefferson Medical College in the US have also found that alcohol speeds growth in existing HIV virus in a patient.⁶ As little as three beers spread over two days caused the existing HIV virus to increase at ten times its normal rate. ■

2 Sheri D. Weiser et al. 2006. A Population-Based Study on Alcohol and High-Risk Sexual Behaviors in Botswana.

3 Deborah Fahy Bryceson et al. 2004. Social pathways from the HIV/AIDS deadlock of disease, denial and desperation in rural Malawi.

4 Zheng, Jun et al. 2004. Ethanol Stimulation of HIV Infection of Oral Epithelial Cells. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*. 37(4):1445-1453.

5 Palmberg, Mai. 1993. *Aids i Afrika*. Nordic Africa Institute.

6 *Journal of Infectious Diseases* 167:789. 1993.



PHOTO: SARA SANDBERG

No ordinary commodity

The report *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity* confirms, among other things, that alcohol comprises a considerably larger global problem than many believe and that there are alcohol policies that are proven to work.

Professor Thomas Babor of the University of Connecticut has a PhD in psychology and is a world-leading researcher in alcohol and alcohol policy.

The findings of the report more than ably support the choice of title – alcohol is definitely no ordinary commodity. Published in 2003, the



Thomas Babor

report is penned by Babor and fourteen other alcohol researchers from around the world. Between them, they wanted to answer two questions: Just how big a problem is alcohol and are there ways to reduce the problem that really work?

The researchers pored over all available research in the field published since 1994, reviewing more than 500 research articles. One of the conclusions was that alcohol is a major global health problem.

“That’s one of the most apparent findings,” says Babor. “If we look at de-

veloping countries that have no problems with famine, malnutrition or high infant mortality, alcohol is at the top of the list of risk factors. Tobacco, which is usually considered more harmful to health, first appears in third place.”

“Today we have very solid research in the field and know which strategies are effective.”

Much of the report confirms prior knowledge, but that alcohol is so high a risk factor for global ill health surprised the researchers.

“That the results speak so clearly has probably contributed to the report gaining relatively much attention, as well as to alcohol now – for the first time – being quite high on the WHO’s agenda.”

Restrictions most effective

As regards which methods and strategies actually work at reducing the problems associated with alcohol, the report is clear. All available research shows that different types of restrictions work best. Among the most effective measures are restricting the availability of alcohol through limited opening hours, monopolies and age limits, as well as high taxes on alcohol.

“These strategies are well supported by the research we’ve reviewed and demonstrably work,” says Thomas Babor.

Regarding developing countries that still lack alcohol policies, Thomas is of the opinion that they ought to avoid reinventing the wheel

and learn from countries that have found successful ways to limit the harm caused by alcohol.

“Today we have very solid research in the field and know which strategies are effective.”

The title of the report, “Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity”, comes from the conclusions of one of the researchers.

“Alcohol quite simply can’t be treated just like any other commodity,” says Babor. “It’s poisonous, intoxicating and addictive, and must be treated as such. Unfortunately, the trend has moved in the opposite direction in recent years. If we value health as much as we value freedom, then we cannot treat alcohol just like any other commodity.” ■

Which methods work?

The report *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity* shows that different types of restrictions are best in the prevention of alcohol-related problems. Information initiatives, which are often put forward by the alcohol industry as a better alternative to legislation, generally have little or no effect on people’s existing behaviour.

Among the most effective measures are restricting the availability of alcohol through limited opening hours, monopolies or age limits, together with high taxes on alcohol.

Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity

The report was published in 2003 by Oxford University Press. The book was financed by bodies such as the WHO. No less than fifteen of the world’s foremost alcohol researchers contributed to the report. Other than Thomas Babor, the authors include Griffith Edwards, Esa Österberg and Robin Room.



A representative from Brown Forman, the company behind Jack Daniels, talking to the EU health commissioner Markos Kyprianou.

The alcohol industry as a lobbyist

The political arena is gaining in importance for the alcohol industry. With intensive lobbying, the industry is attempting to stop the passing of laws and regulations that check or reduce their sales. One of the strategies employed is to give the impression of assuming corporate social responsibility.

The alcohol industry generates annual sales of some 815 billion dollars.¹ Major player Diageo is represented in 180 of the world's 194 countries and each year sells alcohol for about 11 billion pounds, or some 22 billion dollars.²

This has given the alcohol industry considerable political weight in some countries. In the UK, the government has occasionally been accused of being at the beck and call of the whisky industry while in France the wine industry has long walked the corridors of power.

All industries attempt to gain political influence, but for the alcohol industry much of its future development may depend on such influence in many places, in Europe in particular. Increasing numbers are realizing the harmful effects of alcohol and are starting to consider different types of restrictions to limit the damage. This is something

1 Alcoholic Drinks: Global Industry Guide. 2007. Datamonitor.

2 Diageo Fact Sheet, www.diageo.com (2007-04-30).

that the industry always opposes. On Heineken's website, under the heading Risk Management, we can read the following:

"An increasingly negative perception in society towards alcohol could prompt legislators to introduce restrictive measures. Limitations in advertising and availability could lead to a decrease in sales and damage the industry in general. Sales of Heineken products could materially decrease."

Just like all other profit-making businesses, Heineken and other players in the alcohol industry have one goal above all others: to ensure the best interests of shareholders in terms of the greatest return on investment. Simply put: maximize profits.

Political decisions, whether made by sovereign states, the EU or multilateral organizations such as the WTO, play an important role in how easy or difficult it is for the alcohol industry to operate. Restrictions such as limited availability, high taxes, and advertising bans are obstacles on the road to greater profits and must, from the industry's perspective, therefore be opposed.

Behind the scenes

The alcohol industry exercises its influence in many different ways. Extensive efforts to influence are implemented nationally and internationally, not least through the industry's major trade and lobbying organizations.

These efforts are made both behind the scenes and openly. One example of the former efforts can be taken from the UK.³ In the UK, the blood alcohol limit for drink-driving is still 80 mg/ml, considerably higher than the EU's recommended 50 mg/ml. When Tony Blair came into office in 1998, his government stated that it planned to drop the limit to the EU's recommended level. However, this was not done – no bill proposing a change in the law ever came into parliament. Instead, in 2002, the UK government decided to retain the old higher limit. It was later revealed that the minister responsible for the issue had met on several occasions with representatives of the Portman Group, a lobbyist group formed by the UK's major drinks manufacturers. Members of the group include Bacardi-Martini, Carlsberg UK, Diageo and InBev.

A House of Lords Committee appointed by the UK parliament stated that "the department's position coincides with that of the alco-

³ Room, Robin. 2006. Advancing industry interests in alcohol policy: the double game. *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, issue 6/2006.

hol industry but is opposed by local authorities, the police, the British Medical Association, the Automobile Association, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Transport Research Laboratory, and the Parliamentary Advisory Committee for Transport Safety". The chair of the Committee, a Labour peer, noted he "was surprised by the apparent influence of the drinks industry".

Strategic corporate social responsibility

Lobbying is also conducted openly, often via what are known as social aspects organizations, organizations created by the alcohol industry to act on issues concerning the social aspects of alcohol and its abuse.

This strategy, to win influence by appearing socially responsible, is not completely new. When an organization for the treatment for alcoholics was established in the US in the 1940s, the industry quickly realized the advantages of getting involved. Representatives of the alcohol industry sat on the board of the US National Council on Alcoholism for many years. The idea from the industry's side was to support the development of treatment methods while attempting to prevent the organization from supporting restrictive alcohol policies that could harm the industry.

Researchers have since been able to show how great the alcohol industry's influence was. Two of the first three chairs of the council were forced out after breaking the informal 'agreement' and suggesting different types of sales restrictions to prevent and reduce alcohol abuse.⁴

Social organizations of the alcohol industry

The alcohol industry's social aspects organizations have grown over the past 20 years. The organizations act at international level (ICAP, International Center for Alcohol Policies), European level (EFRD, European Forum for Responsible Drinking) and national level (such as the UK's Portman Group, mentioned earlier).

Even if the organizations seldom, or never, make a secret of the fact that the alcohol industry is behind them, their names and public images often provide the illusion of independence. ICAP's website, for example, presents the organization as "an alcohol policy think tank involving governments, the alcohol industry, and public health".

⁴ Room, Robin. 1983. Former NIAAA Directors look back.

Strategies for influencing

The alcohol industry's social organizations use a number of different strategies to influence legislation and research on alcohol:⁵

- Lobbying and other efforts to gain influence over alcohol policies at national and international level.
- Gaining membership of organizations, committees and networks. (Not only groups working solely with alcohol. ICAP, for example, is a member of the UN Global Compact, a platform for corporate heads throughout the world that aims to “make the new global economy sustainable”.) This provides influence and a better image.
- Finance research, host conferences and publish reports. When the report *Alcohol Policy and the Public Good* was published, the UK's Portman Group offered GBP 2,000 to researchers who could criticize the report and allow the Portman Group to publish the results.⁶
- Establish new organizations in growing markets and developing countries. Finding new markets is of high priority to the alcohol industry. And they also offer golden opportunities to get involved and influence alcohol policies right from the start.
- Formulate and publish joint statements and platforms for cooperation. In 1997, ICAP and a number of major alcohol manufacturers such as Diageo, Heineken, Bacardi and South African Breweries (later SABMiller) drew up a document generally known as the Dublin Principles. The document states, for example, that the industry, together with governments and international organizations, “should take appropriate measures to combat irresponsible drinking”. However, the measures listed in the document include only those already criticized by researchers as ineffective.
- Formulate a code of ethics. As a part of acquiring increased credibility and in the hope of avoiding stricter legislation on alcohol, the social organizations also formulate codes of ethics. These codes may describe, for example, how the companies may conduct their marketing. This usually entails stating that marketing must not target the young or play on sex. Experience shows, however, that these codes are seldom followed. Swedish Vin & Sprit, for example, has been criticized for advertisements referring to a street in Hamburg renowned for its extensive sex trade. Deciding

⁵ The beverage alcohol industry's social aspects organizations: A public health warning. 2002. Eurocare.

⁶ Rows over drinks industry's attempt to rubbish alcohol report. *Alcohol Alert*, April 1995.

whether or not to follow the code of ethics is up to each individual company, and no system is in place to penalize companies contravening the code.

Responsible drinking

Common to all these organizations is the opinion that the problems with alcohol are best dealt with by changing people's habits. If you can teach people how to drink sensibly, the problems will disappear. A united research community countering that such measures are ineffective unless combined with measures to reduce overall consumption (high prices, limited availability and so on) is conveniently ignored. ■



WTO – a threat to good alcohol policies

As many people are aware, the WTO is an organization intended to promote free trade. What many people do not know is that WTO membership can affect a nation's opportunities to implement an effective alcohol policy. Most vulnerable are developing countries.

Lo Duc is the street, Hanoi is the city. Home to one of the largest distilleries in North Vietnam; a street lined with stores selling alcohol. It is evening time, but the stores are still open. The families that run the stores often live in the same buildings, with the store taking the role of living room, a TV in the corner and dinner eaten in the centre of the room.

A litre of vodka costs a dollar. There is no tax on alcohol. There are no age limits, no restricted opening hours and no monopoly. In fact, there is almost no alcohol policy at all.

But things are starting to change. There is increasing awareness that alcohol is a major problem and there is talk of and plans for measures and new legislation. The problem is that it might be too late. Vietnam recently joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), just as the organization is negotiating a trade agreement that makes it difficult or impossible for member countries to pursue active alcohol policies.

No “unnecessary obstacles to trade”

The World Trade Organization, or WTO, is an organization comprised of 150 member countries. The aim of the organization is to promote free trade between member countries and to break down any trade barriers by reaching trade agreements. Agreements within the framework of the WTO regulate trade in goods and services between countries, but also affect the domestic trading laws of the member countries. The agreements include issues relating to alcohol, such as rules governing retail trade and service, but there is no separate or broad discussion within the WTO on alcohol or alcohol policies.

The WTO agreement that will most likely affect member states’ alcohol policies is GATS, the General Agreement on Trade in Services. This agreement includes a large number of rules on how a country may and may not regulate trade – not only import and export, but even domestic trade. The agreement under discussion in the current round of negotiations expands upon these rules. In principle, the proposed new agreement states that countries may not have any “unnecessary obstacles to trade”.

Naturally, exceptions can be made, such as measures to protect public health and the environment, but the problem is that the exceptions may not be stricter than necessary.

Reversed burden of proof

So who decides what is necessary? Is a sales monopoly necessary to maintain public health or can it be maintained in other ways with regulations that are less disruptive to trade? Can Vietnam introduce a ban on alcohol advertising or is that an unnecessary obstacle to trade? Would Tanzania be allowed to introduce higher age limits, or can other methods be claimed to achieve the same health goals?

If, for example, a country has regulations on alcohol, another member country can question whether those regulations are consistent with the agreement. This issue is dealt with on occasion by a panel of WTO lawyers who conduct a necessity test.

One of the problems is that a reversed burden of proof is employed. The country wishing to retain the regulations must prove that the regulations are required to attain, for example, established health goals, and this is often an almost impossible task.

Greatest problems for developing countries

The new WTO agreement can, in other words, create problems for countries wanting to implement restrictive alcohol policies. The greatest problems caused by the agreement are faced by developing countries. There is an indisputable risk that in their efforts to join the WTO, many countries will lose their room to manoeuvre in pursuing active alcohol policies in the negotiations. Without pre-agreed exceptions, it can, for example, later prove impossible for a country to introduce a monopoly.

Wealthy countries with ample resources to expend on WTO negotiations can more easily guard their national interests and negotiate exceptions, while many developing countries lack the same opportunities. Many poor countries have one or two negotiators who are expected to handle all negotiations. At the same time, awareness of alcohol problems is still low in many developing countries. Once they realize the problems and want to act on them, it may be too late.

The alcohol industry and the WTO

The alcohol industry works actively to influence WTO negotiations, as they would benefit greatly from regulations that favour trade and make it more difficult for member countries to introduce restrictions on alcohol. CEPS, an organization for European distillers, published a document prior to the negotiations in Hong Kong at the end of 2005 in which it is stated that the WTO ought to “eliminate restrictions on the marketing of spirits” and generally improve the industry’s “access to the market”.

The Doha round and the collapse

Since November 2001, the member states of the WTO have been negotiating the so-called Doha round, named after Doha, the capital of the desert state of Qatar where the negotiations began. The objective of the Doha round is to renegotiate the various trade agreements employed within the WTO since the mid-1990s.

The original idea was to begin negotiations in Seattle in 1999, but negotiations were delayed due to strong protests.

In the summer of 2006, negotiations collapsed, though at the time of writing (spring 2008) negotiations have been reinitiated.

Looking to the future

Alcohol affects people's lives in many ways and on several different planes. The picture presented here is bleak, so it is important to remember that there are also examples of favourable development.

In recent years, we have seen increasing awareness of the problems alcohol causes, especially in poor countries. Two studies in particular have opened a great many eyes. The first was "The Global Burden of Disease", published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2002, and in which alcohol is shown to be one of the largest risk factors for illness and premature mortality in the world.

Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity, written by Thomas Babor and fourteen fellow researchers, was published the following year. After reviewing in principle all available research on alcohol published since 1994, the group confirmed the position taken by the WHO in naming alcohol one of the main causes of ill health. Moreover, the proven methods for the prevention of alcohol problems were clearly presented. Information has little or no effect while methods such as high prices and limited availability have proven most effective. Today, there is growing consensus on this issue, in the research community as well as in the political sphere.

The EU has adopted an alcohol strategy. In a union that less than a decade ago treated alcohol as an agricultural issue, this is an important milestone, even if the strategy was watered down and rendered ineffectual by intensive lobbying from the alcohol industry. If the line of conflict in the alcohol issue was previously drawn between north and south in the EU, today it is drawn between the ministers of health and agriculture.

World Bank no longer supports alcohol projects

As early as March 2000, the World Bank adopted a new policy on alcohol (Note on Alcohol Beverages). This document states that more support shall be provided to initiatives to prevent alcohol problems

and that assessments must always take into account public health in projects that include investments in alcohol production. Since then, the World Bank has not allocated funds to any such investments.

New legislation in Sri Lanka

Since December 2006, all advertising of alcohol and tobacco is banned in Sri Lanka. An important factor in the adoption of this legislation was the very effective efforts of a local non-governmental organization, the Alcohol and Drug Information Center, ADIC.

The ADIC, which receives financial support from, among others, IOGT-NTO, the Swedish section of IOGT, has worked for the new legislation since the mid-1990s. The issue was first raised in parliament in 1999, but was soon withdrawn. Pressure from the alcohol industry has been hard.

“It’s difficult to find politicians with a burning interest in this,” says Pamodinee Wijayanayake, former head of the ADIC. “We try to make it an issue of the people. If our politicians are to gain power, they must win the confidence and the votes of the people. Pressure from the voters is all we have to negotiate with.”

Thailand has also discussed a new law against the marketing of alcohol.¹ The bill proposes a ban on all alcohol advertising with the exception of advertising in “private and closed” places. An earlier bill with roughly the same wording failed to gain acceptance after intensive lobbying by the alcohol industry.

Alcohol and aid

Awareness of alcohol as an obstacle to development is also growing among popular movements and aid organizations. However, few aid organizations actively work with alcohol-related preventative measures in their projects, so it is too soon to make any general conclusions from the limited experience.

Work to this end is, however, underway, such as in the cooperation between the Norwegian aid organization Forut and IOGT-NTO, the Swedish section of IOGT. The website www.add-resources.org gathers facts and tools for aid organizations wanting to understand and accept the challenge of alcohol as an obstacle to development. ■

1 Cabinet backs bill on alcohol control, *The Nation*, 14 March 2007

