

Tobacco Control Success Story: Ethiopia



Ethiopia adopted one of Africa's strongest tobacco control laws with direct support from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK). Enacted in February 2019, the law requires 100% smoke-free work and public places, bans tobacco advertising, restricts the sale of flavored tobacco products and mandates large, pictorial health warnings. It also prohibits tobacco sales to anyone under 21. Today, Ethiopia's tobacco control law sets a model for the region and incorporates key policies that have been demonstrated to drive down tobacco use and save lives.

THE CHALLENGE

Almost 17,000 Ethiopians die every year from tobacco-related diseases. Adult tobacco use is relatively low, at about 5%, but the [direct and indirect costs](#) of smoking in Ethiopia are estimated to be 1,391 million Birr (about US\$50 million) each year.¹

Over 70% of Ethiopia's population is under 30 years of age, and Ethiopia has been targeted by the tobacco industry as a market for expansion: Japan Tobacco International paid the highest amount of money in history for the acquisition of an Ethiopian company when it purchased a stake in the National Tobacco Enterprise in 2017.

A draft bill containing strong policies on tobacco control and other key health measures was initiated in 2014, but progress was delayed by political instability and frequent Cabinet reshuffles. Also complicating the process: the government itself had a stake in the tobacco industry, until the National Tobacco Enterprise was privatized at the end of 2017. The tobacco industry took advantage of the situation to weaken and delay the legislative process by attempting to interfere in the process. It also used familiar tactics such as reporting an exaggerated level of illicit tobacco trade and claiming that government policy would have little influence over tobacco use.

Despite these challenges, Ethiopia eventually passed a law compliant with the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the global tobacco control treaty.



OUR ROLE

Over a period of five years, CTFK worked with civil society and government to strengthen their capacity to pass the law.

- **Legal Analysis and Drafting:** Working with a local legal consultant, CTFK assisted with the drafting of the bill and advised the government throughout the lawmaking process. CTFK also provided legal trainings to civil society and government officials, including lawyers in the Ministry of Health and Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration.
- **Education:** CTFK provided grants to support two civil society organizations to engage government officials on the issues and to engage with media. We supported local partners in building their advocacy capacity through trainings, advocacy material development and other ongoing technical assistance.
- **Media Advocacy:** To build awareness and shape the advocacy environment, CTFK provided media capacity building workshops for local partners and government officials. CTFK trained reporters on the health impacts of tobacco use and the benefits of tobacco control policy. In addition, we trained local advocates to engage directly and effectively with the media to broaden the public messages about the need for strong tobacco control legislation.
- **Industry Accountability:** CTFK worked with an investigative journalist to monitor the tobacco industry's attempts to influence the media and government officials, and how it positioned front groups to interfere with the legislation. This strategy provided officials and members of parliament with the information they needed to anticipate and mitigate industry interference.
- **Advocacy Research:** CTFK commissioned several local studies to generate evidence to support advocacy efforts, including a study on the illicit trade of tobacco products that indicated the tobacco industry had been using misleading data to prevent government action. CTFK used air quality monitoring studies to identify tobacco smoke levels in indoor environments, and commissioned a public opinion poll in Addis Ababa to assess the public's understanding and acceptance of the law, all of which helped our partners develop advocacy strategies and craft messages in support of the law.

¹ Sources: [Global Adult Tobacco Survey Factsheet: Ethiopia 2016](#) and American Cancer Society, Inc. and Vital Strategies: [The Tobacco Atlas](#).

RESULTS

The Food and Medicine Administration Proclamation, the law containing the new tobacco control policies, was passed unanimously by Ethiopia's Parliament in February 2019. The law helps to protect Africa's second-largest population from the world's leading cause of preventable deaths and is serving as a model for other countries.

Ethiopia's Tobacco Control Law:



100% smoke-free work and public places



Bans tobacco advertising



Restricts the sale of flavored tobacco products



Mandates large, pictorial health warnings



Prohibits tobacco sales to anyone under 21

LESSONS LEARNED

Ethiopia's legislative success was supported by the trust built between civil society and government officials, with assistance from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

- 1 Leadership from relevant ministries was crucial. The Ministry of Health and the Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration provided and defended the strongest possible bill in Parliament.
- 2 The government relies on civil society to help address industry interference and other challenges. Civil society will need to continue to monitor the industry and its front groups to counter their false arguments as the law is implemented.
- 3 Results from capacity built can be sustained over time and across different policies and campaigns. In February 2020, local partners used their acquired comprehensive advocacy skills to support the Ministry of Health and the Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration to successfully advocate for a tax reform and increase on the price of tobacco products.



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ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is the leading advocacy organization working to reduce tobacco use and its deadly consequences in the United States and around the world. Through strategic communications and policy advocacy campaigns, we promote the adoption of proven solutions that are most effective at reducing tobacco use and save the most lives.

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