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Country report on tobacco advertising and promotion ban – Botswana

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1. Overview of tobacco control activities in Botswana

The Government of Botswana has long recognized and accepted the need to sensitize its population to the harmful effects of tobacco. The Primary Health Care approach, adopted in the 1970s in Botswana after the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration emphasized this requirement. However, the theme “Tobacco or Health”, launching the first World No Tobacco Day on 7 April 1988 in Botswana, marked the beginning of an intensive anti-tobacco campaign in the country. Since then, World No Tobacco Day has been held annually on 31 May. The commemoration of World No-Tobacco Days together with other educational programmes aimed at different sectors of the population and the general public, have contributed to sensitizing the general public about tobacco products’ harmful effects on human health and fostered a positive political climate. This has led to the development of a comprehensive tobacco control programme in Botswana.

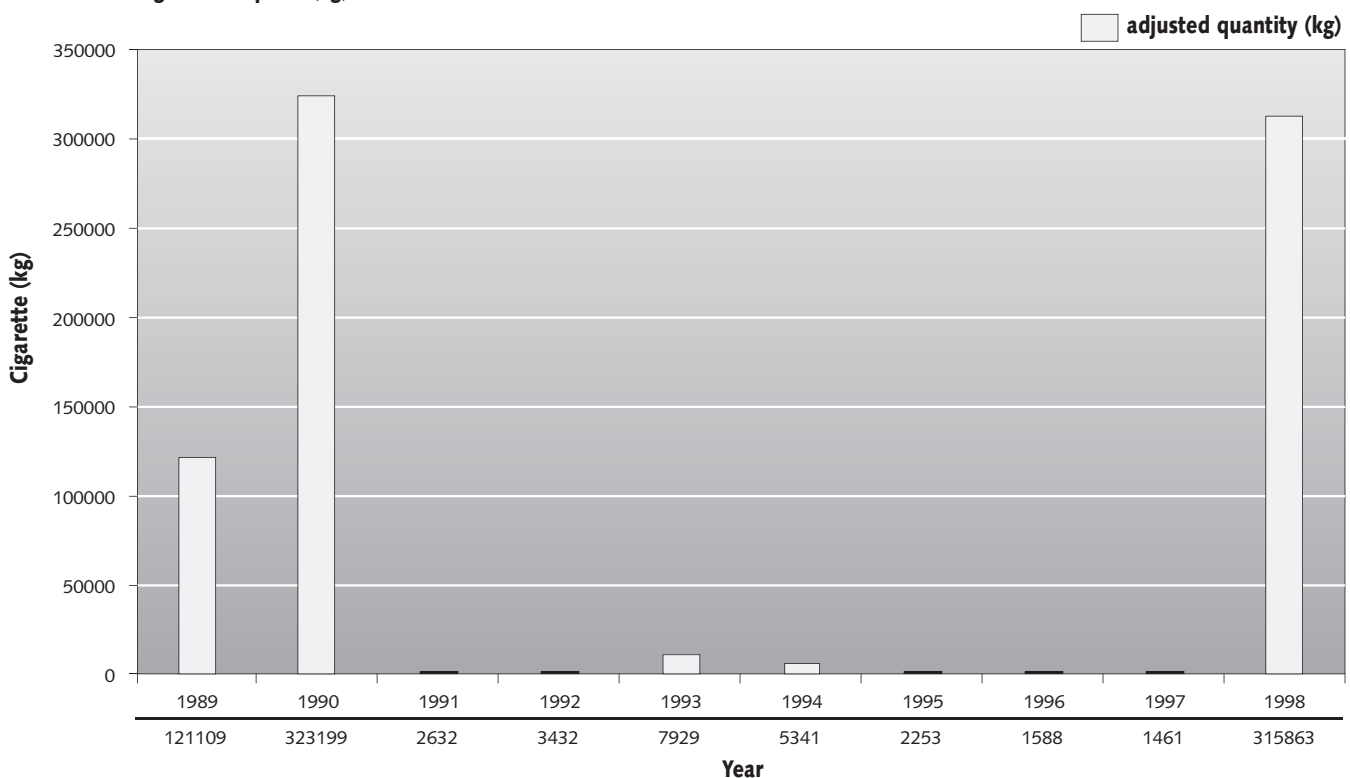
In December 1992, the Government of Botswana enacted its first law on tobacco and tobacco products—the Control of Smoking Act (CSA). The intention of this Act is to control smoking in enclosed public places, which include licensed premises, government and private offices, health

institutions, public transportation and passenger lounges. The legislation also prohibits tobacco advertising and sales of tobacco products to persons under 16 years of age. To ensure the smooth implementation of its provisions, the Act also established a committee whose primary role has been to advise the Minister of Health on all matters relating to tobacco smoking.

Following the enactment of the law in 1992, several major developments took place. In 1993, a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) responsible for implementing the Act was established. The NCC’s membership included government representatives from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Agriculture, Health, Transport, Trade and Industry and the private sector—the Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU) and the Botswana Confederation of Commerce, Industry and Manpower (BOCCIM). The activities of the Committee include sensitization of the different population groups on the health effects of tobacco and on the requirements of the CSA.

The national airline Air Botswana was the first to respond to the provisions of the Act by banning smoking on all its domestic flights in 1993. In 1995 the Airline expanded the ban to all flights within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

Figure 1
Cigarette imports (kg)





As part of its sensitization activities, the NCC organized its first stakeholder workshop in 1994 aimed at familiarizing senior government officials, the private sector and community leaders with the Act's provisions and the actions required from them. Particularly important at this workshop were issues related to the Act's requirement that every employer prepare in writing, a workplace smoking policy in consultation with the employees. The primary objective of the workplace smoking policies is to ensure that employees who do not smoke or who do not wish to smoke in their workplace are protected from tobacco smoke. As a result of this workshop a positive response was received from both Government and the private sector. During the same year (1994) the Directorate of Public Service Management issued a Directive, which prohibited smoking in all government offices and government vehicles. Smoking was also banned on public transport in 1994. One of the major commercial banks, Barclays Bank of Botswana, also responded to the call by banning smoking in all its banking halls.

In 1997 a major campaign to create smoke-free workplaces was launched. It comprised training managers in workplaces on how to develop workplace smoking policies and sensitizing them to the importance of protecting non-smokers from the harmful effects of tobacco. The education campaign also linked smoking with productivity, enlightening managers on the effects of smoking on their organizations' performance. In 2001, a survey assessing the implementation of the CSA and, in particular, the establishment of workplace smoking policies was carried out. The survey showed that 91.0% of private companies had such policies, 77.0% of which were written. The majority of the written policies were done after 1997 (Figure 1).

2. Tobacco-growing and use in Botswana

Botswana is not a tobacco-producing country. However, different types of tobacco and its products are imported

Product	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Tobacco (not stemmed/ stripped)	70856	143886	24005	35934	88391	28689	8149	29502	432363	35396
Tobacco (partly stemmed/ wholly stripped)	63559	44957	92739	174166	134478	193044	224634	127570	2795	33801
Tobacco refuse	74603	123	0	341	44412	23307	11750	101085	182494	162780
Cigars, Cigarillos	45940	104659	976258	773918	28214	34234	22512	45935	15521	61073
Cigarettes	121109	323199	2632	3432	7929	5341	2253	1588	1461	315863
Smoking tobacco (tobacco substitute)	630203	149560	28005	26192	24920	4985	6426	9086	8868	3851
Cigarettes, cheroots, cigarillos & cigarettes (containing tobacco substitutes)	66927	89132	110118	81985	80026	59916	62444	53717	80687	78229
Homogenized/ reconstituted tobacco	2508	33722	30052	3572	29477	2843	613	6252	54603	99653
Other	55420	26956	21705	25462	21206	22650	71670	90649	83841	176961



from neighbouring countries such as South Africa. There are also a limited number of households that grow tobacco for their own consumption and sales to households without tobacco gardens on a restricted scale. Although there are no data on tobacco consumption in Botswana, there is evidence that most of the tobacco and tobacco products imported into Botswana are consumed domestically. Data from the Central Statistic Office (1993, 1996) have shown that over a five-year period (1992–1996) less than 2% of tobacco and tobacco products were legally exported (re-exports) to other countries. Table 1 shows quantities of various tobacco products imported to Botswana between 1989 and 1998. It is evident from the table that cigarette imports are significantly higher than other tobacco products. However, a major reduction in the imports was recorded between 1991 and 1997.

Although data are available in Botswana on tobacco expenditure, it is difficult to know the trends in consumption by age group, sex and population groups. However, available information shows that male-headed households (where the family considers the male as a head of the family) spend more on tobacco than female-headed households (i.e. where the family considers the female as a head of the family) (Ndegwa, 1998).

The prevalence of tobacco use among the youth has also increased over the years. Traditionally, it is taboo for young persons (school age) to be seen smoking in public, or at school. But over the years more and more young persons have been observed smoking in public, and caught smoking in school. While we do not have data on the reasons usually attached to the suspension of school children from school, cigarette smoking is more often reported as the culprit for the suspension. A recent study of 1 920 secondary school students in Botswana showed that 14.2% of the students aged 13–15 were using some form of tobacco, 6% smoked cigarettes and 11% used some other form of tobacco such as cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff and pipes (Botswana GYTS, June 2002). In the same study, four out of ten students lived in homes where adults smoke in their presence, and six out of ten were exposed to smoke in public places.

The CSA restricts smoking in enclosed public places such as restaurants and other licensed premises, passenger lounges and waiting rooms. It requires that 50% of an eating hall be reserved for non-smoking customers. The restriction, however, does not adequately protect the non-smokers since there is no physical separation of the smok-

ing and non-smoking areas. This situation therefore justifies the high exposure (60%) of students to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) in public places.

It is now well documented that the use of tobacco and its products increases a person's risk of contracting a number of diseases. There is a relationship between tobacco use and chronic diseases such as cancer. In a recent 18-month study by Nashi and his colleagues (2001) 605 out of 911 patients diagnosed and treated for cancer in 3 referral hospitals in Botswana were associated with tobacco use.

Tobacco advertising and promotion in Botswana

Tobacco advertising and promotion activities appear both to stimulate adult consumption and to increase the risk of youth initiation. Research has shown that children buy the most heavily advertised brands (Centers for Disease Control, 1994), and are three times more affected by advertising than adults (Polay et al., 1996). Although there are no data specific to Botswana on the relationship of tobacco advertising to tobacco consumption, studies in the United States of America have shown that 34% of all youth experimentation with smoking in California between 1993 and 1996 could be attributed to tobacco promotional activities (Pierce et al., 1998).

The 1992 CSA prohibits tobacco promotion and advertising. This prohibition grew out of the high level of awareness at the political level of the harmful effects of tobacco and the fact that tobacco growing is not one of the country's major economic activities. The Act prohibits the publication by persons or arrangement for any other person to publish any tobacco advertisement in Botswana. Tobacco advertising, as defined by the Act, "means any words written, printed or spoken, or film or video recording or other medium of broadcast or telecast, or pictorial representation, design or device used to encourage the use of or notify the availability of, or promote the sale of any tobacco or tobacco products, or to promote smoking behaviour." The National Tobacco Control Committee and the Environmental Health Officers in Local Authorities and in the Ministry of Health currently administer all provisions of the tobacco legislation. These bodies together with the Police are also responsible for the enforcement of the ban on advertising and promotion.



Since 1992, direct and indirect advertising of tobacco products has not been permitted in Botswana. All tobacco billboards were removed and no advertising was allowed on the print media, radio or television. The current issue of concern is cross-border advertising, which cannot be addressed by national legislation alone. The tobacco industry is also finding ways of cutting into this prohibition by brand stretching. Some of their current activities include cigarette lighters made up as little dummy cigarette packets (Marlboro brand), clothing and household commodities such as ashtrays and menu holders in restaurants bearing brand logos (Marlboro in particular).

To address this problem, counter-marketing attempts were made to offset pro-tobacco influences and increase pro-health messages and influences throughout the country. Counter advertising activities were therefore used to promote smoking cessation and decrease the likelihood of initiation. The activities included media advocacy and other public relations activities such as press releases and national and local health promotion activities and events. While there are limited data to quantify the influence on public support for tobacco-free interventions, reports by members of the public on violations of the provisions of the Act, particularly smoking in public places are on the increase. In 2000, employees in 16 private companies in the capital city of Gaborone reported such violations, followed by 42 in 2001. There has also been an increase in the number of smokers and other tobacco users who want to be assisted to quit. While a total of 255 smokers needing help were registered in 2000, 449 were registered in 2002 nationally.

Implementation of the ban on tobacco promotion and advertising

Although there are no tobacco industries in Botswana, there are several sales agents for different tobacco brands. Before the advertising ban policy was introduced, these agents were responsible for advertising the products in the entire country, including efforts to ensure that their products were advertised and displayed in an attractive and visible fashion in supermarkets and other retail outlets. As soon as the advertising ban came into force, all adverts and attractive displays of tobacco products were removed from supermarkets and other outlets.

Tobacco agents in Botswana have responded to this move

by engaging in other marketing tactics such as giving free gifts in the form of pens, ashtrays and other promotional material with logos of the different tobacco brands printed on them. The companies also engaged in handing out free cigarettes in malls, night clubs and hotels to members of the public, including the youth.

Furthermore, in 1998, the tobacco agents intensified their efforts to use other forms of indirect advertising to recruit more smokers and encourage the use of other forms of tobacco products. Sponsorship or event marketing, being a form of promotion that is a key component of marketing strategies for tobacco industries began to surface in Botswana. Sponsorship of sports and cultural events, which are relatively cost-effective forms of advertising and promotion, became the tobacco industry's focus of attention. The industry approached a few organizations offering them money to carry out their activities. However, this was unsuccessful because of the public's high level of awareness of the CSA's advertising and promotion provisions. The tobacco agents are cognisant of the advantages of event marketing over traditional advertising in heightening tobacco brand-name visibility, shaping consumer attitudes and communicating commitment to a particular lifestyle. These events, which include sporting activities and music festivals, are often designed to appeal to the youth market, create good will for the tobacco industry through association with sports and the arts, and to link tobacco use with exciting, glamorous and fun events.

Successes of the intervention

In the late 1990s, the intensification of the tobacco industry's campaign in Botswana threatened to defeat the Government's determined efforts to control the use of tobacco in the country. Tobacco imports, in particular cigarettes, immediately fell in 1991, a year before the enactment of the CSA. Over and above a ban on tobacco advertising, the Act restricts smoking in enclosed public places and prohibits the sale of tobacco products to persons who have not yet reached 16 years of age. Figure 1 shows a reduction in cigarette imports between 1991 and 1997. The intensified public education on tobacco and the harmful effect it causes to its consumers could have also contributed to this fall in cigarette imports. To date there have been no reports of any violations of the advertising ban.

This success cannot be attributed only to the introduction of legislation. It is also a result of the strong partnership between the Government and the private sector. Through



this partnership a high level of compliance achieved and weaknesses in the legislation were identified in a timely manner. The raised awareness of the legislation's requirements has empowered communities to report any anomalies they discovered, thereby making it difficult for the tobacco industry to defeat government efforts. For example, the organizer of the Miss Botswana Beauty Pageant sent a representative to approach the tobacco control activities office in 2001 to enquire whether a tobacco agent based in Botswana could sponsor the pageant. In 2002, another representative from the Botswana Volleyball Association also enquired about sponsorship by a tobacco agent. Both organizations were approached by tobacco companies proposing sponsorship. The organizations, being aware of the advertising provisions of the CSA, immediately sought advice from the Tobacco Control office. In response to these enquiries the two organizations were advised that the law does not allow any advertising and that it is common practice for any sponsoring organization to be acknowledged during the event by way of verbal or written communication. They were informed that it was not advisable to allow such sponsorship since the industry may want their products advertised, which might contravene the provisions of the law on advertising. There have also been reports of the tobacco industry offering sponsorship for music festivals in the country, but these never materialized. Although the tobacco industry offered sponsorship to various organizations, it is heartening to note that as a result of the general public's awareness of the tobacco legislation and, in particular, the provisions on advertising, the industry was denied the opportunity to advertise its products indirectly.

Through the involvement of organizations such as the Wholesalers Association of Botswana, compliance has been successfully monitored within the retailing community, ensuring that there were no tactics used by the tobacco agents in the country to promote tobacco use. Partnership with local authorities and the media were also some of the crucial aspects to compliance.

Despite the successes we have had, we still have shortcomings, which need to be addressed constantly and in a sustained manner. A sharp increase in cigarette imports was observed in 1998 and while it is fully acknowledged that the data may need to be studied further, there are a few factors that may be linked to this increase. The tobacco industry, being aware of the advertising ban in Botswana, has used other forms of indirect tobacco advertising not explicitly covered by the law, thereby

increasing the demand for tobacco in the country. Second, the increase came at a time when South Africa, a neighbouring country, was tightening its tobacco control laws. Third, we have observed the establishment in Botswana of new tobacco agents to begin marketing their products. It is therefore probable that more tobacco products were imported to Botswana due to the increase in the number of tobacco agents that were otherwise based in South Africa. Lastly, even though this has not been confirmed, the increase could be due to imports from South Africa smuggled back into that country as a result of the tightened legislation. As indicated, the current data need further verification from its source.

Limitations of the Control of Smoking Act (CSA) of 1992

While the CSA has played a major role in the control of smoking, particularly in restricting smoking in public places, reducing tobacco sales to persons under 16 and banning tobacco advertising, it has been limited in scope. There are difficulties in the language of the Act, such as the provision on smoke-free workplaces, which requires the employer to consult with staff inputting in place a no-smoking policy that allows protection of non-smokers while giving smokers a place to smoke. Even though most organizations have these policies, there are some practical difficulties. The great success of bans on smoking in workplaces may have therefore been more the result of the intensive anti-tobacco campaigns and government directives that followed immediately after the enactment of the legislation. The CSA of 1992 never intended to achieve this objective, and was limited to creating a partial ban on smoking in the workplace, with accommodation for smokers. While the advertising ban was successful, with advertising disappearing from the media, issues of cross-border advertising are not adequately addressed. The tobacco industry has found ways of cutting into this prohibition by brand stretching. Smoking in restaurants and the restrictions on sales to children under 16 years old were also some of the problematic areas of the 1992 CSA.

The CSA empowered employees to complain to their employers about violations of the Act in the workplace. But this proved to be difficult if it was the employer smoking. In practice, the Tobacco Control Office has been receiving complaints and attending to them as best as it can.



While the Act has an elaborate scheme of fines, not a single prosecution was ever brought by the police force. This is despite the mechanism for admission of guilt, which would have greatly facilitated enforcement of the Act. It would be relatively easy to do random inspections of say restaurants and issue spot fines to any establishment that does not comply with the 1992 CSA (the requirement of separate smoking and non-smoking areas with signage). Similar enforcement could be done for workplaces.

In 1999, the Government decided to revise the CSA to cover the above issues, including aspects of advertising such as sponsorship and other promotional activities not explicitly covered by the 1992 CSA. The proposed new act "The Tobacco Products Control Bill" is intended to repeal the 1992 CSA and to provide a comprehensive tobacco control regime. Some of the issues addressed in it that were not covered by the previous act include packaging and labelling prescriptions, comprehensive bans on advertising, prohibition of tobacco, promotion and sponsorships, anti-smuggling measures, taxation of tobacco products, licensing requirements and litigation-enabling provisions.

The Act is currently being revised with the help of the World Health Organization (WHO) and is nearing completion. The process of revision has entailed extensive consultations nationally in the form of meetings among different stakeholders involving government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The Botswana Government actively participated in the negotiations of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Of major interest to Botswana were the provisions of the Convention on advertising, promotion and sponsorship. Botswana is one of the countries strongly advocating for a ban on tobacco advertising, including cross-border advertising. This has been particularly so since it was the first to ban advertising in the region but its efforts have been thwarted by cross-border advertising from neighbouring countries. The revision of the Act is a comprehensive one that covers all other tobacco products not included in the 1992 CSA and is in line with the provisions of the Convention.

Conclusions

Comprehensive restrictions on tobacco advertising are necessary to prevent the proliferation of messages and images that attract people, especially youth to tobacco products. Such restrictions are aimed at reducing the appeal of tobacco products, pre-empting the tobacco industry's efforts to develop positive associations with tobacco products and thus help prevent their use and ensuing dependency (Joossens, 1997). A comprehensive prohibition is considered the most effective measure to achieve the policy objective. All forms of advertising contribute to making tobacco products socially acceptable and desirable as consumer goods and therefore represent an inducement to use tobacco products. Consequently, alternative measures, such as a partial ban, a ban on lifestyle advertising or a ban on advertising aimed at youth, would not appear to be as effective.

Although there is no comprehensive data on the trends in tobacco use and consumption in Botswana, there is evidence that a ban on tobacco advertising is an important component of comprehensive tobacco control. However, in addition to underscoring this importance, it is equally essential to recognize why a ban on tobacco advertising alone cannot work. The involvement of the communities for which the legislation/ policy is developed and a strong political commitment to tobacco control, are crucial for any intervention to work. To achieve the individual behaviour change that supports the non-use of tobacco, communities must be empowered to change the way tobacco is promoted, sold and used. Effective community programmes must involve families, work places, schools, places of worship and entertainment, civic organizations and other public arenas. The ban on advertising in Botswana has therefore succeeded due to the involvement of the communities for which it was intended.

In its effort to curb tobacco use, the Government of Botswana has continued to focus on the need for national and local action required to ensure the success of tobacco control interventions. The Government acknowledges the unique role played by the different sectors within and outside government in tobacco control efforts.

One of the major shortcomings of the tobacco control programme in Botswana, however, is the lack of surveillance to monitor the achievements of our primary goals. These include prevalence of tobacco use among the different community groups, per capita tobacco consumption and the prevalence of pro-tobacco influences, including advertising, promotions and events that glamorize tobacco



use. Specific evaluation surveys and data collection systems are also needed to evaluate our advertising ban. The lack of financial and technical resources has led to this vital component being left behind.

Enforcement of tobacco control policies enhances their efficacy both by deterring violators and by sending a message to the public that the leadership of the country believes the policies are important. Tobacco advertising, protection from environmental tobacco smoke and restrictions on minors' access to tobacco, are some of the important areas requiring enforcement strategies. While a ban on advertising has worked for Botswana, it has done so because of the recognition that individual tobacco control components must work together to produce the synergistic effects of a comprehensive programme. A ban on tobacco advertising, therefore, could not have achieved the expected results without the needed community education and empowerment strategies in place.

A major lesson learned is that, when making policies on tobacco control, regional cooperation and collaboration should be considered seriously. The issue now before Botswana is cross-border advertising, which has proved to be difficult for the country to tackle alone.

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