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# ROLLING THE WHEELS OF COLLABORATION

Tobacco control policy development and  
alcohol policy implementation in Zambia

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För att delta digitalt via Zoom:

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Rolling the wheels of collaboration: Tobacco control policy development and alcohol policy implementation in Zambia

## Abstract

**Background:** In many low-and middle-income countries, tobacco smoking and harmful alcohol consumption are major public health threats that are inadequately addressed at the policy level. For example, efforts to formulate a comprehensive tobacco control policy have been on going in Zambia for close to 12 years, but the country has still not yet been able to finalise one. While Zambia adopted an alcohol policy in 2018, its implementation remains a huge challenge. This thesis sought to enhance understanding of the context and the collaborative dynamics in the Zambia tobacco control and alcohol policy processes. In particular, it aimed (i) to determine the extent and sociodemographic determinants of tobacco smoking and harmful alcohol consumption (Sub-study 1); (ii) to explore and explain the role of principled engagement and shared motivation in the delayed tobacco control policy (Sub-study 2); and (iii) to unpack factors that shaped the capacity for joint action in the implementation of the alcohol policy (Sub-study 3).

**Methods:** This was an embedded mixed-methods study that comprised a across-sectional study based on the World Health Organization STEPs population-based survey of 4302 individuals (Sub-study 1) and two policy case studies – the tobacco control policy development (Sub-study 2) and the alcohol policy implementation (Sub-study 3). Sub-study 2 used key informant interviews data collected from 27 tobacco control policy stakeholders across several government sectors, civil society, and an international organisation. The data was supplemented with a document review of tobacco laws and policies in Zambia. Regarding Sub-study 3, 25 key informant interviews were conducted with members of the National Alcohol Policy Implementation Coordination Committee. The quantitative data were analysed using log binomial regression while thematic analysis was applied to the interview data.

**Results:** For the context, Sub-study 1 showed substantial disparities in daily tobacco smoking and binge drinking between men and women. There was a higher prevalence of smoking in men, older adults, and those with the lowest education level, while binge drinking was more prevalent in men and urban residents. Sub-studies 2 and 3 revealed several system level factors that affected the collaboration in the tobacco control policy process, including interference from the tobacco industry, contradictory laws that incentivise tobacco production and weak enforcement of subsidiary tobacco control laws. Further, the systemic issues affecting collaboration in implementation of the alcohol policy comprised the framing of alcohol as an economic issue, the weak regulation of illicit alcohol production and the sociocultural acceptance of harmful alcohol consumption behaviours. According to Sub-study 2, the collaborative dynamics of principled engagement and shared motivation in the tobacco control policy process have been constrained by ineffective communication, mistrust, limited evidence, the absence of community advocacy and the lack of authority among sector representatives. Sub-study 3 revealed that the alcohol policy is generally recognised as a framework for stakeholder action targeting the control of harmful alcohol consumption. However, weak coordination and resource challenges among implementing agencies have undermined their capacity for joint action, ultimately impeding the implementation of this policy.

**Conclusion:** The higher prevalence of tobacco smoking and binge drinking among sub-groups such as men, older adults, those with the lowest education level and urban residents calls for targeted strategies in collaborative efforts to address tobacco and alcohol. Several policy and legal issues affect the development of the tobacco control policy, while the collaborative dynamics are fraught with challenges that threaten critical collaborative outcomes such as trust, commitment and legitimacy. Thus, embracing practices that seek to foment trust, understanding, and legitimacy among key government sectors may go a long way in accelerating collaboration in the tobacco control policy process. Furthermore, enhancing the collaborative efforts to implement the alcohol policy will require strengthening the capacity for joint action by overcoming coordination and resource challenges among implementing agencies.

**Keywords:** alcohol policy, binge drinking, collaboration, principled engagement, shared motivation, tobacco policy, tobacco smoking, Zambia

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