

Strengthening Alcohol Policy Through Evidence-Based Interventions: A Case for the Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill in Uganda



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Introduction/ overview

- Alcohol misuse in Uganda remains a significant public health issue with far-reaching social and economic consequences.
- Despite past regulatory efforts, alcohol-related harm continues to affect vulnerable populations, particularly youth and rural communities.

Objective

- This presentation aims to outline:
 - The proposed interventions within the Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill,
 - Assess their potential impact, and
 - Highlight strategies for overcoming challenges in implementing these measures.
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Background and context

- **Alcohol Misuse and related effects in Uganda:**
- Alcohol consumption is widespread in Uganda, with an estimated 23% of adults reporting alcohol use (WHO, 2019).
- 70% of Ugandan youth aged 15-24 report consuming alcohol, with harmful drinking behaviors on the rise (MoH, 2021).
- **45% of men and 13% of women** reported alcohol consumption, with a marked increase in alcohol use among younger adults. The financial resources spent on alcohol often contribute to **high levels of household debt**, as families borrow to sustain drinking habits, (UDHS 2019).
- Alcohol-related health problems and lost productivity cost the Ugandan economy an estimated **\$300 million per year**. This includes direct healthcare costs, as well as losses due to absenteeism in the workforce and accidents, particularly in sectors like agriculture and construction (**UBOS,2020**).

Background and context

- **Alcohol Misuse and related effects in Uganda:**
- Rural areas experience higher levels of alcohol misuse, contributing to significant health and social challenges (**UDHS, 2020**).
- **28% of domestic violence cases** in Uganda were directly related to alcohol consumption, with women and children being the most affected, (**The Uganda Police Force 2018**).
- A significant portion of household income is spent on alcohol, with estimates indicating that **nearly 30% of household spending** in some regions is allocated to alcohol (**UBOS, 2020**).

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Background Cntd:

Alcohol Misuse in Uganda and its related harm

- **22% of adult patients** admitted to **Mulago hospital** (Uganda's largest referral hospital) had alcohol-related liver disease, with **cirrhosis** being the most common diagnosis. **30% of people with hypertension** also had a history of alcohol abuse. Moreover, regular alcohol consumption can **worsen hypertension** in people already diagnosed with the condition, (Uganda Medical Journal (2020)).

- **Alcohol and Hepatitis:** In addition to cirrhosis, alcohol misuse in Uganda also contributes to the higher rates of **Hepatitis B and C**, which can accelerate liver damage when combined with alcohol abuse (Uganda Health Research Council, 2019). **48% of young people** aged **18–34 years** had consumed alcohol in the past month, with significant increases in binge drinking behaviors, (Uganda National Drug Authority (UNDA, 2021)

- Studies estimate that alcohol consumption is associated with **24% of new HIV infections** in Uganda each year (Uganda AIDS Commission, 2020).

Background Cntd:

Alcohol Misuse in Uganda and its related harm.....

- Approximately **15% of alcohol users** experience mental health issues such as depression and anxiety disorders, which are often exacerbated by the social stigma surrounding addiction, (**Ugandan National Institute of Mental Health Study, 2020**).
- Alcohol-related traffic accidents have risen by **14%** over the past five years, making alcohol a key factor in Uganda's road safety issues, (**The Ugandan Police Force, 2018**).
- The **World Health Organization (WHO, 2020)** states that Uganda has one of the highest alcohol consumption rates in sub-Saharan Africa, with **19.6 liters of pure alcohol per capita** consumed annually. Among men, the percentage of alcohol consumers is much higher than that of women, with **45% of men** and **13% of women** reporting alcohol use (WHO, 2020).

Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill; UAPA's ROLE

UAPA's Role in Policy Advocacy

- Vision; A Nation Free of Alcohol Related harm
- Pioneers and Lead organization of Alcohol regulation advocacy in Uganda
- Founded in 2011
- 65 members
- 20 partners
- Support; Ban on alcohol sold in sachet-2019, National alcohol Control policy, 2019, 3 unique UAPCs. Drafting and presentation of the bill in offing.
- **Key Goals of the Bill:**
- Prevent the Under age from early exposure to alcohol use.
- Promoting public health through evidence-based policies.
- Protecting youth, families, and communities from alcohol-related harm.

Evidence from Other Countries

- Strengthening Regulatory Measures; invest in alcohol related harm research. enhance enforcement of alcohol regulations.
- This could include increasing inspections of alcohol production facilities, enforcing minimum age requirements for alcohol purchase, and regulating alcohol advertising, especially in media channels frequented by young people.
- Community-Based Interventions; mainly focusing on **life skills training**, particularly for young people, to help them resist peer pressure and make informed decisions about alcohol use.

Evidence from Other Countries.....

- Economic Empowerment Programs for alternative livelihood to address poverty and unemployment.
- Programs that offer vocational training, microfinance opportunities, and financial literacy could help reduce alcohol misuse by improving economic stability.
- Evidence from these countries shows that well-enforced alcohol policies lead to reductions in consumption and related harms, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Proposed Interventions in the Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill (ADCBC)

1. Restrictions on Sales Near Sensitive Areas:

- Alcohol sales prohibited near schools, health centers, and religious institutions to reduce exposure to alcohol, especially for young people

Evidence: In Uganda, **40% of youth** (ages 15-24) report easy access to alcohol near schools, (Chikritzhs & Stockwell, 2002).

2. Higher Taxes on Alcohol:

- Introducing a tax increase on alcoholic beverages to reduce consumption, particularly among low-income groups.

Evidence: a **10% increase in alcohol taxes** can reduce alcohol consumption by **8-10%**. (Vassallo et al., 2019).

Proposed Interventions in the Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill (ADCBB)

3. Strict Advertising Regulations:

- Banning alcohol advertisements on mass media, especially those targeting youth and women.

Evidence: A 2020 survey in Uganda found that **65% of youth** are exposed to alcohol advertisements, which increases their likelihood of drinking, harm. Restrictions on alcohol advertising reduce youth consumption and drinking-related harm (Hastings et al., 2005).

4. Establishment of a Regulatory Authority:

- Creating a body to oversee the enforcement of alcohol-related policies and ensure compliance with regulations.

Evidence: Countries with dedicated alcohol regulatory bodies have more effective policy enforcement (Babor et al., 2010).

CHALLENGES OF ADOPTION OF THE ADCB

- **Resistance from Industry Stakeholders:**

Alcohol industry lobbies argue that stricter regulations will harm the economy and lead to job losses.

Counterpoint: Evidence from other countries shows that long-term economic benefits, such as reduced healthcare costs and increased productivity, outweigh short-term losses (Stockwell et al., 2017).

- **Political and Social Challenges:**

Some policymakers and members of the public view alcohol as a cultural norm and resist policies perceived as overly restrictive., others argue that alcohol control is a violation of personal freedoms., it constrains the night economy.....

Public Awareness: Lack of widespread understanding of the long-term benefits of alcohol regulation.

CHALLENGES OF ADOPTION OF THE ADCB

Implementation and Enforcement:

- The success of the bill will depend on the ability to enforce regulations consistently across urban and rural areas.
- **Statistic:** In Uganda, over 70% of alcohol outlets operate without licenses, indicating a need for better regulation and monitoring (esp. illicit traders).

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

- **Strategy:** Strengthen public awareness campaigns using data-driven messaging.
- **Counterpoint:** Public health data consistently demonstrates that alcohol misuse imposes significant societal costs, justifying regulatory intervention (Rehm et al., 2009).

Strategies for Overcoming Challenges.....

- **Advocacy and Public Awareness:**

- **Data-Driven Campaigns:** Use of local statistics and case studies to highlight the health, social, and economic impacts of alcohol misuse in Uganda.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage communities through outreach programs and local dialogues to build public support for the bill.
- **Youth Education:** Promote education programs in schools and communities to raise awareness about the dangers of alcohol misuse.

- **Building Political Will:**

- Engage policymakers with evidence on the long-term economic and social benefits of alcohol control, including reduced healthcare costs and improved productivity.

- **Strengthening Enforcement:**

- Propose measures for improving alcohol outlet monitoring, creating a national database of licensed sellers, and increasing penalties for non-compliance.

Expected Impact of the Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill

- **Reduction in Alcohol-Related Harm:**

- Evidence suggests that the proposed measures could lead to a **20% reduction in alcohol-related deaths** and injuries over the next 5 years.
- **Decrease in Underage Drinking:** With stronger sales restrictions and advertising bans, underage drinking could decrease by up to **30%**.

- **Economic and Social Benefits:**

- A reduction in alcohol misuse would lead to **lower healthcare costs**, improved workplace productivity, and a reduction in social issues like family violence and crime.
- employees who misuse alcohol are **2-3 times more likely** to miss work and are **less productive** when present due to hangovers or alcohol-related health issues.

- **Improved Public Health:**

- With fewer people suffering from alcohol-related diseases, Uganda's overall public health indicators could improve, particularly in rural areas.

Alcohol consumption trends and some of the related harms

	2009	2024	2034
Alcohol Consumption Trends regular alcohol use	35% of adult men and 7% of adult women	45% of men and 13% of women	50 -65% of men and 20 -25% of women
Alcohol-Related Health, family and social Impact.	Liver disease accounted for about 20% of hospital admissions.	30-40% of liver disease cases. hypertension is now 26% among adults,	alcohol may contribute to 40-50% of liver disease cases by 2034.
Policy & regulatory changes	alcohol consumption in Uganda was subject to limited regulation	introduced stronger regulatory measures.	public health crisis, economic instability, The cost of inaction would be extremely high, both in terms of human lives and economic resources.

Impact: Public Health Strain: More people, particularly the youth, will develop alcohol dependency and associated health problems such as **liver disease, hypertension, and mental health disorders.**

Increased Social and Economic Costs: Greater alcohol consumption will strain public health resources, including hospitals, clinics, and emergency care services, as more people seek treatment for alcohol-related injuries and diseases. while alcohol consumption has always been part of Ugandan society, the scale and impact of alcohol-related harm have grown significantly over the past 15 years

Key drivers: increased disposable income (campaign time), robust youth targeted marketing, urbanization, cultural shift, No alcohol regulation Now, changing social norms

Conclusion

The **Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill** represents a crucial step in addressing the growing alcohol misuse crisis in Uganda.

By implementing evidence-based interventions, Uganda can significantly reduce alcohol-related harm, protect vulnerable populations, and improve public health.

The Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill aligns with Sustainable Development by promoting public health, reducing alcohol-related harm, and fostering healthier, more resilient communities, thereby contributing to the achievement of several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Recommendations for Success

Continued advocacy, public education, and engagement with policymakers are critical to ensuring the bill's passage and successful implementation

Public Awareness Campaigns: Use statistics and evidence to drive public support for the bill.

Engagement with Stakeholders: Ensure continuous dialogue with industry stakeholders, government, and civil society organizations to address concerns and garner support.

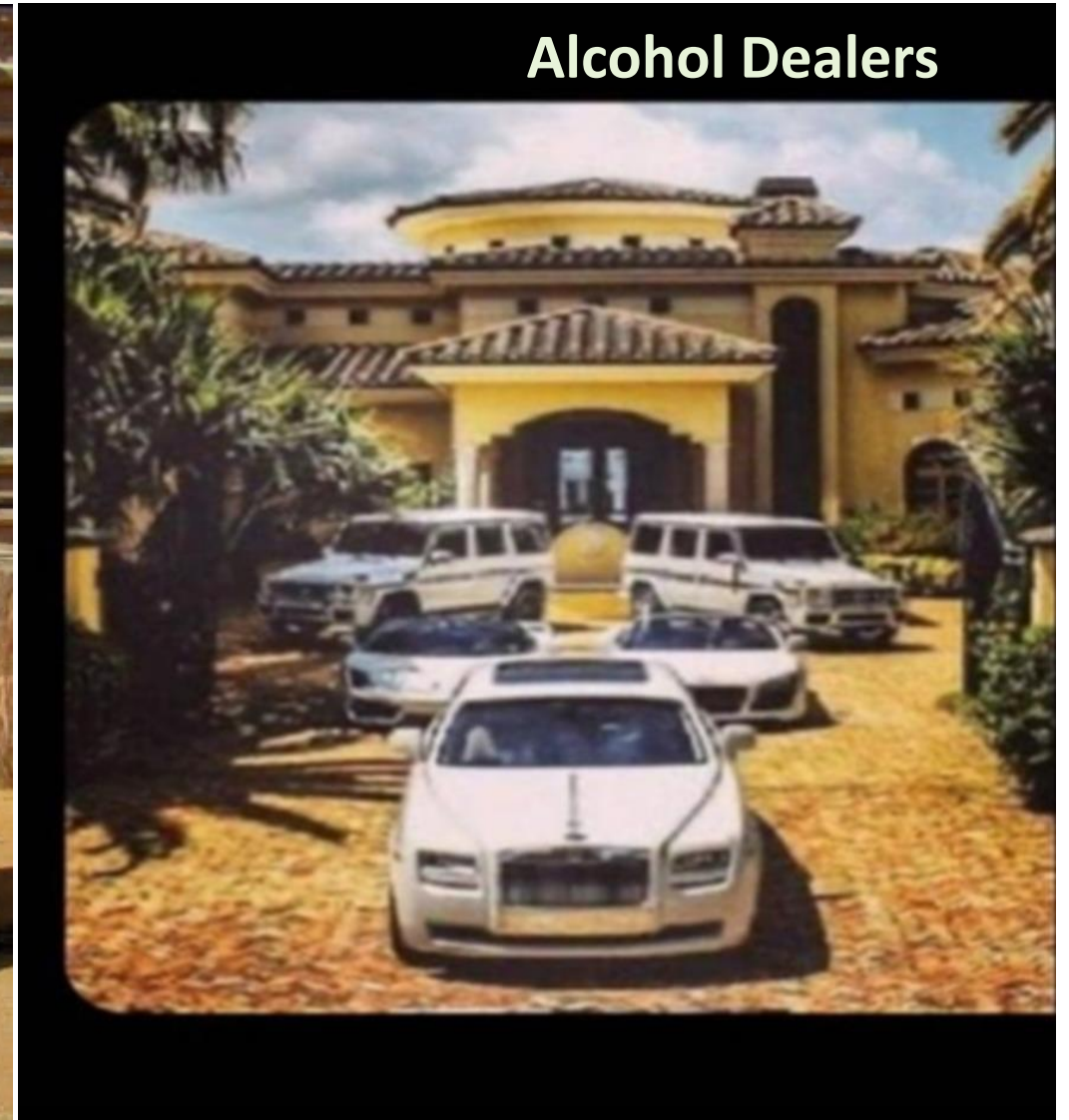
Robust Enforcement Mechanisms: Establish strong enforcement and monitoring systems to ensure compliance with new regulations.

THANK YOU



Alcohol consumers

Photo credit:<http://thehealthteacher.com/tag/alcohol/>



Alcohol Dealers

Photo credit:<http://thehealthteacher.com/tag/alcohol/>

We can change This Narrative .