

Asia Pacific Alcohol Policy Alliance

Submission to the WHO online consultation on the first draft of the Global alcohol action plan

About the Asia Pacific Alcohol Policy Alliance

The Asia Pacific Alcohol Policy Alliance (APAPA) serves as a collaborative & learning space on alcohol policy developments for its members and a network of non-government organizations and individuals committed to the development of effective alcohol policy in the region to reduce alcohol-related harm worldwide by promoting science-based policies independent of commercial interests.



Members & Signatories:

- National Alliance for Action on Alcohol (Australia)
- Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (Australia)
- Cancer Council (Australia)
- Cook Islands Road Safety Council (Cook Islands)
- Hong Kong Alliance for Advocacy Against Alcohol (Hong Kong)
- Rural Development Tuki Association (Nepal)
- Cancer Society of New Zealand (New Zealand)
- Alcohol Action NZ (New Zealand)
- Sri Lanka Alcohol Policy Alliance (Sri Lanka)
- Healthy Lanka Alliance for Development (Sri Lanka)
- Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (Sri Lanka)
- Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD) (Sri Lanka)
- Rahama (Sri Lanka)

- Renzo R. Guinto, MD DrPH, Associate Professor of the Practice of Global Public Health, St. Luke's Medical Center College of Medicine (Philippines)
- Lathika Athauda, Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya (Sri Lanka)
- Son Dao, Centre for Economics and Community Development (Vietnam)

The Asia Pacific Alcohol Policy Alliance also wants to express its support of submissions to the WHO Consultation on the first draft of the Global Alcohol Action Plan by:

- its members (as noted above);
- the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance and;
- Alcohol Policy Futures.

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Key Messages:

1. **Simplify and if possible streamline the Global Alcohol Action Plan.** There is still room to reduce the overlaps within and among the action areas, as well as to improve the operationalization and data accessibility for the indicators and milestones.
2. **Regular reporting to the World Health Assembly.** To further promote intergovernmental collaboration to reduce alcohol harm, we recommend that the Director-General be requested to report to the World Health Assembly biennially on the progress of implementing the Global Action Plan.
 - This should include any challenges faced by Member States and the nature and extent of collaboration between UN agencies. Prior to the review of the SDGs and Action Plan in 2030, a progress report and recommendations for the way forward for reducing alcohol harms through alcohol policy should be submitted to the WHO governing bodies by 2028 at the latest. This is to ensure that there is no further delay to proportionately address any persistent barriers to progress identified through the course of implementation of the Action Plan.
 - **In line with this, the Asia Pacific Alcohol Policy Alliance along with the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance, recommends that the roles and responsibilities of international partners, civil society organizations and academia to contribute to the biennial reporting on the implementation of Action Plan should be clarified and agreed upon prior to implementation of the action plan.** The Asia Pacific Alcohol Policy Alliance is committed to support the WHO, and its member states in the Asia Pacific in implementing evidence-based alcohol control policies free from commercial interests and influence.
3. **Institutionalize the best buys and SAFER Initiative to reduce alcohol harms.** Along with the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance, the Asia Pacific Alcohol Policy Alliance recommends that the WHO should support every country in implementing the three most cost-effective, science-based interventions identified as the best buys and are included in the SAFER initiative; specifically:
 - strengthening restrictions on alcohol availability (alcohol-free environments);
 - enforcing comprehensive bans on alcohol marketing, including digital marketing which is of considerable concern given the targeting of vulnerable groups including indigenous people, young people and women, and alcohol industry sponsorships and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that serve as promotion tools for the alcohol industry
 - increasing alcohol taxes taking into account inflation and increases in income.

- **Ensure that member States allocate sufficient resources for the WHO to fulfill this role and to support implementation of cost-effective evidence-based policies in less resourced countries.** It is essential that the experience of Member States in implementing policy in line with these three 'best buys' is monitored and resources are allocated to support their implementation, especially in low- and middle-income countries, which lack adequate resources and are subject to interference from commercial interests.
 - The WHO and Member states especially in the Asia Pacific need to include the voice of vulnerable groups including indigenous people, young people and women to enable the assessment of equity issues from progressing and developing strategies to address alcohol harm, due to the disproportionate harm experienced by these communities.
- 4. Enhance protection against industry interference.** We note that the economic operators continue to undermine the WHO's important work on alcohol and we recommend that due considerations are given to their commercial interest which leads to a lack of support for effective alcohol policy, and priority be given to reducing their influence at global and national levels. This needs to be emphasized in the proposed action plan.
- **We recommend that all dialogue between the WHO and other UN agencies with economic operators in alcohol production and trade be transparent, and that proceedings of any engagement with the industry be made publicly available.**
 - **Clarify the definition of economic operators in alcohol production and trade.** The ambiguity of the term removes the focus on the alcohol industry and alcohol industry-funded/supported organisations, industry peak bodies, social aspect and public relations organisations, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) entities that support the alcohol industry in preventing, delaying and diminishing effective evidence-based alcohol policy. More importantly, there is room to **minimize the role of the alcohol industry in each action area.**
- 5. Include actionable steps toward an international legally-binding instrument to reduce alcohol harms.** Moving forward, the Asia Pacific Alcohol Policy Alliance, with the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance, is also committed to support the WHO and its member states in pursuing an international legally-binding evidence-based instrument to reduce and prevent global alcohol harms, and ensure that alcohol policies are protected from industry interests and influence.