

Alcohol A Major Obstacle To Economic And Societal Development In East Africa

Brief Outline of some connections Of Social, Economic Problems and Development Obstacles Because Of Alcohol Related Harm: by East African Alcohol Policy Alliance, RADAPA and IOGT International

Evidence shows that alcohol is a cross-cutting, harmful factor in many areas of society from child health, gender based violence, to economic and societal development and sustainability of communities and societies. At least 5 out of the 8 Millennium Development Goals are negatively affected by alcohol harm.

1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

"Poverty is in different ways exacerbated by alcohol: We see in communities throughout the EAC disastrous alcohol expenditure; the pattern is one where men in low income areas divert meager family resources meant for food and other household needs to their alcohol habit. This results in a situation where only part of their already low income is available for household needs. This leads to hunger and a poor diet in the family which in turn leads to avoidable illness especially for children," explains Moses Waweru, Chairman of EAAPA.

"Moreover, if a person ends up with bad health, often caused by alcoholism, then their chances of ever earning a living are dramatically reduced."

Alcohol
Harm
Facts

2) Achieve universal primary education

"In many communities where poverty confines people, children bear a disproportionate burden, in terms of physical and mental health, and negative impact

on their educational opportunities. Alcohol does play a tremendous role. For instance the impact of alcohol abuse and dependence on the user and the family: parental roles are neglected and too often abandoned, wages are drowned in alcohol, household economy is ruined, jobs are lost and health issues even exacerbate the dire situation," explains Ms. Kristina Sperkova, Vice President of IOGT International.

"We know from experience that reducing parents' use of alcohol has a direct and significant positive impact on their children's performance in school."

3) Promote gender equality and empower women

"Evidence shows that alcohol is a huge factor behind violence against women and girls," says Aimable Mwananawe, Chairperson of RADAPA.

"Alcohol rarely is the only explanation or cause for violence, but it's often the triggering factor. We see that it is used to excuse otherwise socially unacceptable behavior. In addition to that, aggressive alcohol marketing techniques of the alcohol industry in the EAC, amplify the common belief of masculine superiority over females, perpetuate objectification and sexualization of women and girls and justify male demonstration of power over the other gender."

4) Combat HIV/ Aids

“There is clear evidence from Africa that alcohol use is a huge risk factor for HIV/ Aids and other communicable diseases. It weakens the immune system. And this effect is obviously more pronounced with heavy alcohol use. Furthermore, a strong association exists between alcohol consumption, HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases,” explains Moses Waweru, Chairman of EAAPA.

5) Ensure environmental sustainability

“More than 25 liters of water are needed in order to produce just one liter of beer. That shows that the global alcohol industry has a huge climate footprint and negative impact on the resource sustainability of communities in the EAC,” says Aimable Mwananawe, Chairperson of RADAPA.

“The effects on poor communities are most severe, when scarce resources are being drained for the production of alcohol instead of the sustaining of community life and development.”

6) Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

NCDs add to the threat of alcohol for development, especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa and EAC, where health systems are poorly built and equipped to treat and help people suffering from those “lifestyle diseases”.

“The alcohol industry perpetuates myths about its economic contribution to countries as well as myths about the effects of alcohol and alcohol policies. The costs for alcohol harm are much greater than the economic contribution of the alcohol industry. And the conduct of the industry, targeting children and young people with their marketing and targeting developing countries with heavy lobbying is highly problematic, knowing alcohol plays a role in generating poverty and hindering development,” says Ms. Kristina Sperkova, Vice President of IOGT International.