

**IOGT International panel contribution to
Ministerial parallel panel:
Synergies across the responses to TB and NCDs**

17.11.17

Topic: Advocacy strategies for reducing the use of alcohol as risk factor for TB and NCDs

Dear excellences, honorable delegates, ladies and gentleman,
It's an honor to address you today representing IOGT International. We are a global civil society movement of 143 Member Organizations in 58 countries. It's my pleasure to share with you the strategies we are using to advocate for reducing the use of alcohol as risk factor for TB and NCDs.

Evidence shows that alcohol use, alcohol dosage and alcohol-related problems are all associated with an increased risk of tuberculosis. In fact, alcohol use increases the risk of TB threefold, and is also a strong risk factor for poor TB treatment adherence.

That simply means Alcohol is an important population level risk factor for TB, and it often is a common co-morbidity among TB patients.

That is why our first core strategy is addressing co-morbidities by providing brief interventions and treatment. For example, our members here in Russia or in Uganda provide various forms of treatment and rehabilitation services to people struggling with alcohol use disorders. In Kampala, Uganda, approximately every tenth patient our member organization treats is also infected with tuberculosis.

Therefore, it is part of our community work to identify these co-morbidities and refer patients to relevant care providers. At the same time, we strive to link up with TB care facilities and help screening their patients for alcohol use disorders. In short our first core strategy is about contributing to close the treatment gap and helping to provide comprehensive care packages by identifying co-morbidities and offering appropriate services.

Even our second core strategy is about closing a gap: the awareness gap, as we call it.

Our analysis shows that alcohol is an obstacle to sustainable development. It adversely affects 13 of 17 SDGs.

Therefore, our second core strategy is to raise awareness about how and to what extent alcohol adversely affects specific Sustainable Development Goals. In that spirit, we work to empower cities, companies, civil society as well as decision-makers to understand and address how alcohol impacts their core mission. We want to create a world where everyone who is affected by alcohol harm is able to understand the burden and has the capacity and tools to craft and implement meaningful solutions in their context. In this way, we contribute to preventing and reducing TB and NCDs, but also violence against women or mental ill-health, to name a few.

Our third core strategy addresses a third gap, the funding gap.

Everything starts with the 3 best buys in alcohol policy – these are population-based measures that are scientifically proven, cost-effective and high-impact – especially when they are implemented in an integrated manner. I talk about:

- Banning alcohol advertising and sponsorships
- Restricting alcohol availability, and
- Increasing the price of alcohol, for example through taxation.

Alcohol harm cannot only be reduced but it can be prevented. So, alcohol policy best buys are prevention tools.

Especially alcohol taxation is a powerful win-win measure. It helps tackling alcohol harm as well as raising domestic resources for health and sustainable development.

But make no mistake: The 3 Best Buys are not a silver bullet. But they are powerful tools that are currently dramatically underutilized – and our work is about partnering with decision-makers on all levels to build capacity and provide concrete technical support for the implementation of well-crafted, evidence-based alcohol policies.

To summarize: The essence of our core strategies is to close gaps through tackling alcohol harm systematically: the treatment gap; the awareness gap; and the funding gap. To close these gaps, we work for mobilizing civil society and grass-roots activists in a bottom-up approach. And it has been my privilege to share their strategies and concerns with you this morning.

I thank you for your attention.