

## **2024 WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY- PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM TOBACCO INDUSTRY INTERFERENCE**

The World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is commemorated around the world every year on 31<sup>st</sup> May to emphasize the harmful effects of tobacco and other tobacco products on health. This year, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), World Health Organization (WHO), Ghana Health Service, and Civil Society Organisations join in with the aim of raising awareness about the strategies employed by the tobacco industry to target children and adolescents. The theme for this year's commemoration is **“Protecting children from tobacco industry interference.”**

Despite the WHO's report citing over 8 million tobacco-related deaths annually, the tobacco industry continues to aggressively market its products around the world, undermining the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). In Ghana, tobacco use remains a pressing concern, with a 2017 Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) revealing that 8.8% of students who participated in the survey aged 13 to 15 years use tobacco products (including shisha) while 4.9% use Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (including E-cigs, vapes). Notably, boys and girls reported similar rates of tobacco use at 8.9% and 8.2% while electronic cigarette use at 4.9% and 5.0% respectively.

Government is committed to eliminating tobacco industry interference and promoting the WHO FCTC's aims, however the tobacco industry devotes enormous resources to opposing the tobacco control measures, both domestically and globally. This is done through the introduction of new trends of nicotine products, championing modification of existing tobacco control laws and regulations to suite trends and programs they wish to introduce and collaborating with influential figures on social media who have a substantial youth audience to promote their products.

These actions not only endanger young people's health but also jeopardize global success in tobacco control efforts. It's important to note that these newer products are prohibited from importation and sale in the country, as mandated by sections 61 and 62 of the Public Health Act of 2012 (ACT 851) and Regulation 16 of the Tobacco Control Regulations 2016, L.I. (2247).

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana also recognizes the right to good healthcare among other rights for the well-being of persons including children and young persons.

The protection of children from tobacco industry interference is critical to their good health and well-being. Governments play a very important role in accomplishing this goal by enacting comprehensive tobacco control policies such as Part Six of Public Health Act, 2012 (ACT 851) and Tobacco Control Regulations 2016, (L.I. 2247). These laws seek to limit children's exposure to tobacco marketing, prohibit access to tobacco

laws seek to limit children's exposure to tobacco marketing, prohibit access to tobacco products, and establish smoke-free zones. Additionally, educating children on the health implications of tobacco use provides them with the knowledge and tools to prevent initiation to any form of tobacco products, seek help to quit and reject the tobacco industry's pressures.

In view of the negative effects and implications of tobacco use, the Ministry of Health, World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Drugs Authority, Civil Society Organizations and other partners intend to roll out some activities: to raise public awareness about the impact of tobacco in this year's WNTD. The activities to mark this year's commemoration include;

- The official launch of WNTD on Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024 in Accra and in all public schools nationwide.
- Public awareness creation exercises nationwide primarily using traditional and social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Radio) on the harmful effects associated with tobacco use. Posters bearing the theme for this year's celebration as well as key messages on the effects of tobacco use, myths associated with new trends of tobacco products, and tactics used by the tobacco industry will be posted on the media platforms to reach a wide population of the youth which are the main targets of the industry.
- Public educational programs in schools, markets, churches, transport terminals would be carried out nationwide with excerpts of these featured on the media platforms.

World No Tobacco Day 2024 provides a chance to rally governments and officials to remain committed to protecting our children from tobacco industry interference through strengthening enforcement of existing tobacco control laws which include strict enforcement of bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. This campaign also calls on civil society, academia, the media, and all individuals to help Ghana establish appropriate measures for creating a tobacco-free society.



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