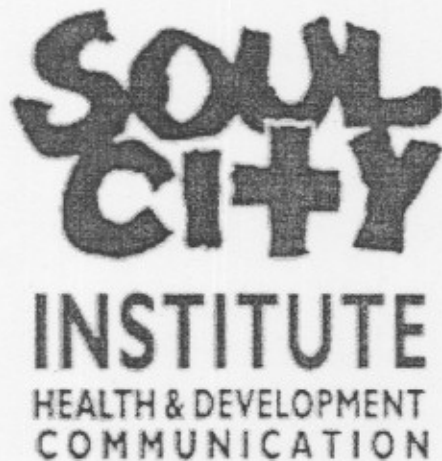


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Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication
Submission to the
Portfolio Committee: Health
on the
**THE TOBACCO PRODUCTS CONTROL
AMENDMENT BILL 2006**



Contact Details: Penny Dlamini, Advocacy Manager
Institute for Health and Development Communication
Reg. No. 95/10944/08 (Association Incorporated Under Section 21)
2nd Floor, Park Terras, 33 Princess of Wales Terrace, Parktown ||
P O Box 1290 Houghton 2041, South Africa
E-mail: penny@soulcity.org.za || Tel : (+27 11) 643 5852 || Fax: (+27 11) 643 6253
<http://www.soulcity.org.za>

31 October, 2006

1. Introduction

Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication is a locally and international acclaimed health promotion NGO which uses the power of mass media to make information popular and accessible. It's a non governmental organisation, going back as far as 1992 at a time when South Africa was on the cusp of democratic change. It subscribes to the principles of the World Health Organization's Ottawa Charter. According to the Ottawa Charter, health is a product of a range of intersectoral actions that include building an enabling environment, advocacy for health public policy, community action, developing personal skills and reorientating the health services towards the health promotion approach.

Soul City IHDC also views health and development as integrally related: poor health impedes development and development is central to improving global health.

The Soul City: IHDC project is made up of:

- A prime time television series
- A daily radio drama
- Booklets on the health topics covered in the broadcast media
- An advocacy campaign which keeps people talking and thinking about social issues placed into public agenda by Soul City
- Adult education and youth life skills mater

The Institute's flagship TV and radio programmes, Soul City and Soul Buddyz, have reached at least 16 million South Africans and won a number of prestigious national and international awards. Each series takes eighteen months to develop. During this time intensive research and consultation is undertaken.

substance abuse and its effects on our society.

A major challenge is counteracting the messages directed at the youth. The Soul Buddyz series modeling of cool and hip young people enjoying life without the use of alcohol or tobacco is a very important underlying message we like to convey.

Given our stance, Soul City: IDHC welcomes the proposed Tobacco Products Control Amendment Act 2006. It is a natural extension to the existing legislation which has had a positive impact in reducing the consumption of tobacco products. We are pleased to note that fewer adults and children a day are lighting up for the first time. Despite these positive developments, we are aware that more than 100,000 children a day are lighting up for the first time. Therefore improving our legislation so as to address this consumption which has such adverse affects on health and our developments as a country is essential.

General Comments

Soul City: IHDC is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the Bill. Although we have some specific comments to make, we would also like to offer our endorsement of the submission made by the National Council Against Smoking (NCAS). In particular we would like to emphasize and

reiterate the reference to how tobacco harms both public health and the economy. The World Health Organization and the World Bank have acknowledged this by urging governments to control tobacco because it is a threat to health and sustainable economic development. Like NCAS we are concerned that:

- Tobacco use causes, or worsens, over 40 diseases including cancer, heart attacks, lung disease, complications of pregnancy and TB.
- Tobacco use kills about 30 000 South Africans each year or about 80 people a day. This is more than double the number of deaths on our roads every year
- A smoker is more likely to die from tuberculosis (TB) than a non-smoker. Every day about 16 avoidable deaths from TB occur amongst smokers.
- Globally, only two major causes of death are increasing rapidly - HIV and tobacco. The WHO predicts that, unless urgent action is taken worldwide deaths from tobacco will double from the current 5 million to 10 million annually by the year 2025.
- Approximately 70% of these future deaths will occur in the poor nations of the world, where already overburdened health services are unprepared for this coming epidemic.

Like NCAS we are pleased to note the increase in fines and penalties for those who ignore the Act.

2 Specific Comments

2.1 Protection of children – no person under 18 in smoking sections

The amendment is far more progressive than its predecessor in its recognition of children as passive smokers and their vulnerability given their weight in terms of inhalation of toxins. We are therefore pleased to note the proposals that will prohibit smoking in private homes used commercially for childcare or educational purposes and the prohibitions on minors in areas set aside for smoking. The extended definition of what constitutes a public space is also a positive step. Given that children are often not in these areas by choice, the law will create awareness in adults who accompany them.

For similar reasons Soul City also supports a ban on smoking in vehicles while children are passengers. Smoking in cars can produce high concentrations of smoke which can harm young children.

3 Marketing of Tobacco Products to Youth

3.1 Smoking parties

The possibility of the tobacco industry seeking various avenues for the marketing of tobacco products to our youth led to the inclusion of a section in current legislation which prohibits free distribution of products and rewards. However it seems that this prohibition is not sufficient.

Reports continue to surface about 'smoking parties' being organized by tobacco manufacturers and distributors. Rebellion and unorthodox behaviour appeals to teenagers and therefore a party organized underground is bound to attract their attendance. It is during these events that free cigarettes are passed around setting the youth on the undesirable path of becoming full-blown smokers.

The improved definition of what constitutes an 'organised event' as proposed in the amendment may have an effect on such activities. However, this is not sufficient and the issue needs to be more fully addressed than it is in the current legislation. Surreptitious events such as organized smoking parties need to be more clearly defined as illegal activities.

3.2 Picture health warnings/graphic warning labels

The current amendment does not mention anything about the expansion of health warnings already on packs. In countries such as Canada where picture health warnings have been introduced, participants in research indicated that they smoked less as a result of the pictures; few smoked more and many were thinking of quitting or reducing. We strongly advocate the use of graphic images to illustrate the health effects of tobacco as well as the increase in the size of the warning.

placing this responsibility on the persons whose premises the machines are on. However, it is our firm opinion that that the new amendment ban tobacco product vending machines.