

## **Concept for Tobacco Control Advocates Coalition meeting**

The increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), particularly cancers, heart disease and stroke, is emerging as a major public health challenge facing Uganda. The rise in rates of NCDs has been attributed to, among other reasons, high rates of tobacco smoking and poor lifestyle and dietary habits. The 2006 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) reveals that up to 75% of Ugandans who suffer from NCDs get them due to tobacco use and exposure.

In February 2004, Uganda banned smoking in public places. This followed a High Court declaration made in December 2002 that smoking in public places was a violation of non-smokers' constitutional rights to life and to a clean and healthy environment. This ban was effected through regulations [National Environment (Control of Smoking in Public Places) Regulations 2004] issued by National Environment Management Authority (NEMA).

The regulations were however, never backed with a policy and exposure to tobacco smoke through active and passive smoking, continued almost unabated. Yet, Uganda has ratified the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Frustration with regulations that are ineffective in controlling smoking in public places has created an urgent need for a law and policy on control of tobacco use and consumption in Uganda. Hence, Hon. Dr. Chris Baryomunsi, Member of Parliament for Kinkizi East Constituency, seconded by Hon. David Bahati (Ndorwa West), has introduced the "Tobacco Control Bill of 2013" as a private member's bill in parliament. The draft law seeks, among other things, to domesticate the FCTC as a way of fulfilling the country's obligations on tobacco control.

Against this background, on 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2013, the Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD), in partnership with Uganda National Tobacco Control Association (UNTCA), and with funding support of United Nations Development Program (UNDP), convened a meeting of key stakeholders to, among others;

- a) Bring together stakeholders to map out partners working on NCDs, HIV, T.B, and Tobacco related areas to support the advocacy for a law and policy against tobacco smoke and public smoking;
- b) To discuss, share findings from tobacco growing communities on the effects of tobacco on health and livelihoods in Uganda;
- c) Build a strategy for engaging stakeholders in sharing data, best practices and collective efforts towards controlled use of tobacco in Uganda;

- d) To address gaps in the existing coalition and coordination efforts for the forum discussing tobacco control in Uganda; and
- e) Develop a strategy to scale up engagement of policy makers and increase legislative forums to support the enactment of a comprehensive policy and law for tobacco control.

From the meeting, stake holders resolved that as civil society we needed to among many issues;

- a) Address gaps and coordination efforts in the existing coalition forum discussing tobacco control in Uganda for effective advocacy;
- b) Develop a common communication network of likeminded people and;
- c) Develop a strategy to scale up engagement of policy makers so as to increase legislative forums to support the enactment of a comprehensive policy and law for tobacco control.

It is from these resolutions that we are inviting members who have filled in a survey expressing interest to join and commit to the coalition on Tobacco Control Advocacy to address gaps and coordination efforts in the existing coalition forum discussing tobacco control in Uganda for effective advocacy. Specific objectives of the meeting will include;

- a) Drawing Terms of Reference for coalition members
- b) Creating an understanding of the kind of advocacy and engagement required of coalition members and
- c) Drawing an advocacy strategy for the coalition for 2014

It is expected that as an output, a meeting report, drawn terms of reference for coalition members to sign on and a strategy for engagement will be availed as deliverables.

The meeting will be a half day meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday 14th November, 2013, at Imperial Royale, from 8.30am to 1:00pm. Lunch will be served thereafter.