



THE OBSERVATORY ON TOBACCO INDUSTRY STRATEGIES

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Editorial

WHO IS CHILD LABOR ON TOBACCO FARMS GOOD FOR?

The United Nations declared June 12 World Day for the Elimination of Child Labor, an effort to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda Goal 8.7, which proposes eliminating child labor in all its forms by 2025 (ILO, 2021).

Tobacco growing is among the worst forms of child labor, according to ILO Convention 182 (ILO, 1999), ratified by Brazil in 2000 (PRESIDÊNCIA DA REPÚBLICA, 2000). All laws relating to treaties signed by Brazil under the ILO were subsequently consolidated by Decree 10,088 (PRESIDÊNCIA DA REPÚBLICA, 2019).

The tobacco production chain, ranging from planting to tobacco processing, exposes workers, whether children or not, to various health risks such as physical exertion, exposure to toxic chemicals and nicotine present in tobacco leaves, accidents with sharp tools, exposure to solar radiation among other risks. Moreover, the following repercussions on health are often observed: musculoskeletal disorders (bursitis, tendinitis, dorsalgia, synovitis, tenosynovitis); pneumoconiosis; cancer; byssinosis; hantaviruses; urticaria; sunstroke; skin burn; premature aging; skin cancer; dehydration; respiratory diseases; actinic keratosis, injuries and mutilations, physical fatigue, acute and chronic intoxications, bronchitis, rhinitis, and occupational dermatitis.¹

¹The green tobacco sickness was described in Brazil in 2010 and 2012 (OLIVEIRA et al., 2010) (BARTHOLOMAY et al., 2012).



Although the damage to health is already well known and documented, measures to eliminate child labor in tobacco farms have not been implemented yet. The worst is that the tobacco industry is not legally responsible for the involvement of child labor in its production chain, even considering that these same children have their attendance at school and their studies affected to work in tobacco growing. This is the most perverse



face of child labor, which, contrary to what is widely disclosed, cannot be explained by cultural or educational issues (CONDE, 2016). Besides having little information and concrete measures, they are neither available nor shared with society.

The National Forum for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor (FNPETI, 2017) participates in the Ministry of Labor and ILO Brazil platform that provides data on child labor in the country (SMARTLAB PLATFORM, 2021). However, it does not present consolidated data on child labor in tobacco growing on its website, although this is among the worst forms of child labor in Brazil (PRESIDENCIA DA REPÚBLICA, 2008) and in the world as well (ILO, 1999).

The tobacco industry, in turn, publicly condemns child labor but continues to buy and use leaves produced in crops where children work and make a profit from them. The industry's insidious practices go much further to "circumvent" the problem through

its corporate social responsibility strategies (STOP, 2021a).

Internationally, research has shown that the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing Foundation (ECLT, 2000), established by British American Tobacco (BAT, 2021) and the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA, 1984), represents the interests of the industry (UNIVERSITY OF BATH, 2020), operating in countries such as the Dominican Republic, Malawi, Uganda, and Tanzania. Since its creation, its work seems to have no actual impact against child labor in tobacco growing, appearing to be just another strategy to improve its reputation (UNIVERSITY OF BATH, 2021).

ILO maintained a partnership with ECLT until 2018 when it ended all partnerships with groups involved with the tobacco industry by the decision of its general assembly (FCA, 2018). Another initiative was the Arise Project (JTI, 2012), funded by Japan Tobacco

International (JTI, 2021), involving the non-profit organization Winrock International and the World Labor Organization in a public-private partnership. Its goal was to eliminate child labor in Brazil, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia. The ILO also ended this partnership in 2018, but Japan Tobacco Brazil (JTI BRASIL, 2021) still reports partnerships in the country through this project (INSTITUTO ETHOS, 2019). The company has become a partner of the Ethos Institute for Business and Social Responsibility (PORTAL DO TABACO, 2018) and continues to report “positive experience” in training organized by the Ethos Institute (INSTITUTO ETHOS, 2017).

Another bet made by the Interstate Union of Tobacco Industries, with the participation of all tobacco companies operating in Brazil, was the creation of an institute called *Instituto Crescer Legal* (SINDITABACO, 2021). Its objective was to fight against child labor and strengthen sustainable management of small rural properties after previous initiatives aimed at addressing the theme in compliance with the 2008 Presidential Decree 6,481 (PRESIDENCIA DA REPÚBLICA, 2008). Its 2021 report (SINDITABACO, 2021) did not state how many children work in tobacco growing or how the institute reduced child labor on tobacco farms, limiting itself to reporting child professional learning initiatives as an alternative to eliminating child labor in rural areas.

Phillip Morris International (PMI, 2021), through PMI Brazil (PMI BRASIL, 2021), reports meaningful participation in these initiatives and the development of the Agricultural Work Practices Program (OLÁ

JORNAL, 2019). In 2021, the company launched a new program to promote greater efficiency and environment protection (PMI BRASIL, 2021), in partnership with a natural and human resource management company (PRODUZINDO CERTO, 2020), with the justification that civil society becomes increasingly demanding about the sustainability of products.

The industry’s corporate social responsibility strategies raise several issues that need to be addressed (STOP, 2021b). They should be banned worldwide once they divert attention from industry activities that violate human and workers’ rights. Critical issues related to child labor seem to be overlooked, such as the poverty perpetuated by tobacco companies, unfair schemes to hire tobacco growers, and denial in organizing or entering into collective agreements.

It is worth remembering that corporate social responsibility activities reduce the tobacco companies’ responsibility for profiting from child labor. They work as a smokescreen to escape their responsibility by transferring the problem to third parties.

Instead of paying for inadequate and ineffective programs, companies should practice fair prices that can ultimately lift farmers out of poverty and, consequently, prevent child labor practices.

The conclusion is that child labor mainly serves in the tobacco industry’s interests and that this industry needs to be held accountable for eliminating this practice.

By Dra. Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva

THE USE OF HOOKAH IN BRAZIL

Through José Alencar Gomes da Silva National Cancer Institute (INCA), the Ministry of Health has handled tobacco control management and governance in Brazil since the late 1980s. A set of national measures, taken from the perspective of health promotion, have been implemented and comprise the National Tobacco Control Program (PNCT).

The program aims to reduce the prevalence of smokers and the consequent morbidity and mortality related to the consumption of tobacco products in Brazil. Among the actions developed and coordinated by the PNCT are national campaigns to raise the population's awareness about the harm related to consumption and other tobacco control issues, including the use of hookah, which young people widely smoke.

Also known as water pipe, shisha, or narghile, a hookah is a smoking device in which a mixture of tobacco is heated, and the smoke generated passes through a water filter before being aspirated by the smoker through a long hose. Using water in the process as if it were a type of filter, hookah consumption is seen as less harmful to health, which is not true, as it is as harmful or more harmful than other forms of tobacco use.

Smoking hookah is usually done in groups. Its easy access, as it is seen as a less harmful product, and its wide dissemination in tutorials and videos in digital media contribute to increased consumption. As its use is not prohibited, only its consumption in enclosed spaces (Law 12.546/11), we

need to guarantee the population's access to high-quality information, demystifying this product and warning about the harm of its consumption. More and more education and information campaigns on different means of communication are needed to make people know the truth about this product. Each session lasts around 45 to 60 minutes. A one-hour long session can result in inhalation of the amount of smoke produced by one hundred cigarettes. The hookah hose is passed from person to person, and they all share the same mouthpiece. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that hookah smokers will be exposed to several microorganisms that can cause diseases, including COVID-19. It is also worth mentioning that smokers usually cough into hookah hoses, and tobacco smoke moisture promotes the survival of microorganisms within it. The use of cold water in the vase or jar can facilitate the survival of viruses and bacteria.

Currently, there is an increase in hookah consumption in Brazil. It rose from 0.14% in 2013 to 0.43% in 2019 (PNS 2013 and 2019).

We need to ensure that Anvisa effectively inspects the places where these products are consumed to avoid smuggling and lower-priced sales.

Unfortunately, as smoking is allowed in Brazil, tobacco is a legal drug, and there are different means of making nicotine available, it is necessary to ensure that the population has access to technical and quality information, thus generating full awareness and a drop in the demand for these products.

What is important to point out is that tobacco is a drug, smoking is a disease, and it causes many others, such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Besides, smoking favors contamination by COVID-19 and increases the severity of the disease.

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Interview



Éric Diego Barioni
Biomedical

Dr. Éric Barioni is Ph.D. in toxicology, and Jornal Cruzeiro do Sul columnist in Sorocaba – SP. In an interview with the Observatory Bulletin, he comments on the risks of indiscriminate tobacco and other drugs use on open TV, the relationship between tobacco consumption and increased risk of COVID-19 transmission and points out the need for mobilization to reduce cigarette use. Read.

Observatory Bulletin: *According to an article published by Folha de SP, BBB21 obtained an average audience of 27.3 points in 100 days of the program, equivalent to about 40 million viewers per day. Amid disputes for the R\$ 1.5 million prize, resistance tests, fights, discussions, and parties with high alcohol cigarette and consumption without restriction. How do you assess the relationship between this exposure and the possibility of increasing tobacco product consumption? Can mass media broadcasting be a gateway for teenagers and young adults?*

Éric Diego Barioni: Well, the relationship between media exposure and consumption has become less intense today, but it remains straightforward. It is silent for many of us, and mass media broadcasting is an open invitation to indiscriminate use, promoted by people who are seductive, excessively confident and influence thousands of others.

I was born in 1986, and I realize clearly how much some things in my childhood marked me: i) my father and many other people around me were smokers; ii) I found cigarette advertisements on television incredible and heroic; iii) I collected cigarette boxes and packs,

and I remember the smell of packages well; iv) I loved a chocolate candy, shaped and named after cigarettes, and I used it to mimic adult smokers' behavior; and v) later, a little more confused, I was brave enough to try cigarette butts found on the floor in the streets. At that time, the relationship between exposure and consumption was obvious, intense, and direct.

Many things have changed since the 1980s, for example, a) cigarette advertisements are no longer broadcast on television; b) powerful or shocking images on the risks and consequences of cigarette use, as well as warning phrases have been included on packaging and at points of sale; c) there has been an increase in tobacco taxation; and, among other things, d) the ban on the use of cigarettes indoors. Unlike what happened during my childhood, children born in this transition period have certainly been progressively exposed to a less influential smoking environment. It has positively reduced the number of users and the frequency of use by people from specific age groups, shaking a chain that supported and maintained tobacco product consumption.

In addition to what I have mentioned here, we have evolved a lot in this period. Relationships, interactions, and generations have evolved with the rise of the internet and social media. The relationship between media exposure and consumption has become less prominent or intense today, but it remains direct and silent for many of us. Big Brother Brazil, considering only tobacco use – once alcoholic beverage advertisements on television and other media easily overlap with any other irresponsible broadcast – was a symptom arising from the sharpness of a chronic disease that affects our society.

In the text I wrote a few days ago, I stressed the importance of monitoring programs such

as Big Brother and using this medium to bring meaning to adolescents and young adults' teaching and learning processes. The reality show can be used to identify the problems that affect our society and discuss them with young people. The indiscriminate use of tobacco on TV countrywide is one of these problems. The subtle movement of tobacco advertising, linked to seductive and influential young people's behavior, left social media and ended up on national television networks. How far are we influenced by people and their behavior, especially when we seek to build our personality and often do not even know who we are?

I remember when I was a child, and some things are clear to me: this unpretentious, natural, and potentially more influential broadcast than a formal advertisement at a Big Brother eviction night deconstructs years of work and fights in favor of the population's health.

OB: *In your opinion, does this type of open (and free) exposure during reality shows benefit the tobacco industry - or is it one of its advertising tools? Furthermore, can tobacco control policies be harmed since the theme for World No Tobacco Day 2021 is "Commit to quit smoking during COVID-19"?*

In 2020, if it were not for the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the theme for World No Tobacco Day proposed by WHO would be precisely this: to raise young people's awareness about the industry's subtle manipulation tactics, unpretentiously linked to the behavior of young people, personalities, influencers, and social media, with products loaded with colors, flavors, odors and increasingly technological. Nowadays, the tobacco industry finds in teenagers, young adults, and disinformation a

fertile ground for their often-organic support, without the need for direct interventions with concealed individual support or sponsorship, for example.

Talking about misinformation with so much information available is something difficult to understand. However, in such distinct times of obscurantism, dissemination, and acceptance of false and incomplete news, it is patent that there is a gap between the sender and the recipient of information, which is often unable to reach its target. I usually ask myself: what is the extent of this gap? At what point do we not make ourselves understood? What languages and approaches should we use to reach an audience that, for example, often knows what should be done but continues to behave reversely or believe in false information? What are the restraints that trap us?

The theme proposed by WHO in 2021, “Commit to quit smoking during COVID-19,” is challenging. Tobacco certainly had and still has its prominent place in these times of anxiety and uncertainties we are currently going through. More than ever, it is necessary to support people who wish to beat addiction and live a healthier life, free from the restraints of tobacco. Successful examples of people who have left addiction without the help of medicines or trained health professionals are not the rule. A dependent without due guidance can easily despair and give up quitting smoking. The pledge to quit smoking also involves a commitment to inform, welcome, and humanize care to go beyond simply fighting the use but also looking at the causes, which are often associated with uncertainty, anguish, anxiety, and misinformation.

OB: *According to WHO, smokers are at higher risk of developing severe disease and death when affected by COVID-19 than non-smokers. Do you consider the exposure to tobacco in times of pandemic to be a broadcaster’s irresponsibility?*

The broadcaster is a complex institution, just as people are complex and other institutions and bodies are complex. There many programs, people, interests, and so I cannot judge the totality. However, the indiscriminate use and encouragement to use traditional and electronic cigarettes, which occurred during episode 101 of the reality show, was undoubtedly an irresponsible action taken by the program and the participants who chose this role to influence and encourage discussions so relevant to our society.

Something that draws my attention at all levels and sectors of society is the distance between what is said and what is done and how one lives. I imagine that the program should have a more comprehensive look at our society’s issues and address public health matters. Cigarettes cannot continue to be promoted as a good escape from difficult times. If TV programs, broadcasters, governments, and the scientific society do not mobilize, traditional cigarette use will evolve into other forms - as we have seen this year - subtle, silent, natural, unpretentious, and potentially harmful behavior which leads to preventable deaths.

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O Dia Mundial Sem Tabaco é celebrado anualmente em 31 de maio. Foi criado em 1987, pela Organização Mundial da Saúde (OMS), para alertar sobre as doenças e mortes evitáveis relacionadas ao tabagismo.

O tema deste ano foi “Comprometa-se a parar de fumar”, principalmente em tempos de pandemia. A escolha do tema está relacionada ao fato de o tabaco matar mais de 8 milhões de pessoas por ano, e, conforme revelam estudos científicos, os fumantes possuem maior risco de desenvolver doenças graves e morte por Covid-19 do que os não fumantes.

Os prêmios do Dia Mundial Sem Tabaco são dados anualmente a indivíduos e instituições das seis regiões diferentes da OMS. Em 2021, a dr^a. Tânia Cavalcante, secretária-executiva da Comissão Nacional para a Implementação da Convenção-Quadro para o Controle do Tabaco no Brasil, recebeu um dos prêmios pela Região das Américas. Essa premiação reconhece o exitoso trabalho de coordenação nacional desenvolvido pelo Brasil que levou à continuada redução da prevalência e garantiu ao país a função de um dos principais players globais no tema.



O Centro de Conhecimento para os Artigos 17 e 18 da Convenção-Quadro para Controle do Tabaco no Brasil, sediado no Centro de Estudos sobre Tabaco e Saúde da ENSP/Fiocruz, promoveu uma conversa informal com Vera da Costa e Silva, ex-chefe do Secretariado e consultora do Cetab, Thomas Novotny, pesquisador da Universidade de San Diego, e Eduardo Blanco, da OMS, sobre o Dia Mundial do Meio Ambiente, celebrado em 5/6. Confira em <https://youtu.be/APIB3Oxgl9E>

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