



Background

Harmful use of alcohol, which refers to a pattern of alcohol consumption that causes damage to health, physically or mentally, has been identified as one of the world's leading health risks [1]. In 2012, about 3.3 million

Document reviews

Documents that were reviewed in this study included: alcohol related policies, strategies and action plans, regulations and laws that were established at national level. This review included most recent versions of the available documents in either hard copy or electronic formats. The policy documents were identified based on the investigators' prior knowledge and information obtained from key informant interviews. This process generated a comprehensive list of all the relevant documents regarding alcohol

Alcohol policies for Malawi

consideration in finalising the National Alcohol Policy and

“The major challenge was coordination. If you are having different sectors, the first thing is it’s not possible to have consistent participation of the members. So, you keep on having new members coming in [because] some members have been transferred. Some sectors like education, some NGOs and (...) civil societies like Teachers Association of Malawi would have permanent members. Sectors like home affairs still have the same people who have been in the process from that beginning to the present, but other sectors like Ministry of Trade would have a senior person coming [for one meeting] and then a junior person coming in [for a subsequent meeting]. That, sometimes caused problems.” (Health Promotion Officer, International NGO)

The third barrier was coordinating the different sectors and getting their views and interests on board. The variety of sectors meant that some of their views were very different and it was difficult to include all of them on board. Differences in views and interests among sectors was also a source of conflict in the formulation of the alcohol policy. Initially, there was competition as to who would lead the process between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. There was also conflict due to differences in

Even after the NGOs abandoned the initial process and alerted government on the need for a national alcohol policy that is independent of alcohol industry interests, the industry still took part in some of the discussions on the formulation of the alcohol policy through dialogue sessions. During these meetings, alcohol industry representatives were reported to have facts that countered what government and NGOs were presenting, specifically highlighting that alcohol is not as harmful as the NGOs were stating. Some key informants also suggested that the alcohol industry was reported to have approached some members involved in the alcohol policy formulation to influence them to support the views and perspectives of the industry.

“When you look at the alcohol industry, the way I’ve seen them behaving is that they will make direct

CSOs provided funding and technical support for the alcohol policy formulation process.

Although the Malawi's alcohol policy formulation had a commendable use of MSA, the process was very pro-

objectively verifiable evidence for actual contributions of the actors during the formulation process.

Conclusions

Malawi's national legislations and policies have inadequate inclusion of the "best buy" interventions for control of harmful use of alcohol. WHO should ensure that there is knowledge and evidence of the "best buy" interventions to both policy makers and technical assistants in all its member states. This could help to reinforce inclusion of the "best buys" in the legislations and policies and implementation of strategies that can contribute to the control of harmful use of alcohol.

Effective MSA in development and implementation of alcohol policies requires structured organisation; collaboration of the multi-sectoral actors; and sustainable financing mechanisms for both development and implementation processes. Consideration of the industry demands during policy formulation can derail the process as well as hinder full inclusion of some key interventions. Policy making stakeholders should be aware of the subtle interference mechanisms by the industry and should devise ways of

16. Malawi Government. Liquor Act of 1979 (Last Amended in 2000) Chapter 50:07 of the Laws of Malawi; 1979.
17. Malawi Government. Liquor production, Marketing & Distribution Regulations (Malawi gazette supplement of 30th April 2015); 2015.
18. Ministry of Health. National Alcohol Po