

AFRICAN TOBACCO CONTROL ALLIANCE

A large, stylized map of the African continent is centered on the page. The map is outlined in a light blue color and is surrounded by several 3D-rendered virus particles, representing COVID-19. The background is a solid blue color. A red rectangular box is overlaid on the map, containing the title text.

COVID-19
AND TOBACCO
INDUSTRY
INTERFERENCE
IN AFRICA

2022

COVID-19 AND TOBACCO INDUSTRY INTERFERENCE IN AFRICA

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The African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA) is a non-profit, non-political Pan-African network of civil society organizations headquartered in Lome, Togo. With membership in 39 countries, ATCA is dedicated to promoting public health and curbing the tobacco epidemic in the continent. The alliance is an Observer to WHO-FCTC Conference of Parties. It has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is certified as equivalent to a US public charity.

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Images: ATCA



Disclaimer

This is a civil society report based on publicly available information gathered online, as well as accounts from tobacco control actors in their respective countries.

If you have information that could strengthen the report, please contact us at: research@atca-africa.org

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TOBACCO KILLS
8,000,000

You cannot trust Big Tobacco to help save lives



Reject tobacco industry's involvement
in COVID-19 response

#StopTobaccoStopCorona

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

AIDS	→ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
API	→ Application programming interface
ATCA	→ African Tobacco Control Alliance
ATIM	→ Africa Centre for Tobacco Industry Monitoring and Policy Research
BAT	→ British American Tobacco
BATNF	→ British American Tobacco Nigeria Foundation
BATU	→ British American Tobacco Uganda
CEO	→ Chief Executive Officer
COPD	→ Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
COVID-19	→ 2019 outbreak of the corona virus disease
CSOs	→ Civil society organizations
CSR	→ Corporate Social Responsibility
EPC	→ Export Promotion Council
FCTC	→ Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
FITA	→ Fair Independent Tobacco Association
HIV	→ Human immuno-deficiency virus
ITP	→ Protocol for the elimination of illicit trade in tobacco products
JTI	→ Japan Tobacco International
KIIs	→ Key informant interviews
KRA	→ Kenya Revenue Authority

MADAR	→ Management et Développement des Actifs et des Ressources
NCDs	→ Non-communicable diseases
NLTK	→ Natural Language Toolkit
NTE	→ National Tobacco Enterprise
PMO	→ Prime Minister's Office
PPE	→ Personal protective equipment
Regex	→ Regular expressions
SAMRC	→ South African Medical Research Council
SARS	→ Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SARS-CoV-2	→ Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SITAB	→ Société Ivoirienne de Tabac SA
SNTA	→ Société nationale des tabacs et allumettes
SON	→ Standards Organization of Nigeria
SSA	→ Sub-Saharan Africa
STAEM	→ Société des Tabacs Algéro - Emiratie
TB	→ Tuberculosis
VPASA	→ Vapor Products Association of South Africa
WHO	→ World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

— **Background:** The COVID-19 pandemic has brought economic setbacks and death while ravaging the health systems of nations around the world. These devastating effects are occurring at a time when tobacco use remains the single preventable cause of death and disease globally. Tobacco use kills about 8 million people around the world annually. The link between tobacco use, and COVID-19 severity has brought more attention to tobacco control as an important public health intervention.

— **Aim:** This study explored how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on tobacco control in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), as well as the activities of the tobacco industry to promote its agenda using COVID-19, and how civil society organizations (CSOs), governments and other stakeholders responded to the threat posed by industry activities to tobacco control on the African continent. The lessons learned for tobacco control during the period of the pandemic were also explored.

— **Methods:** This study was conducted in 2021 and used a qualitative research design in two phases. Phase 1 was a desktop review of available information on the internet including social media to document tobacco industry marketing activities and communications before and during the pandemic. Phase 2 involved key informant interviews (KIIs) involving 23 key stakeholders in tobacco control from 12 African countries to explore activities of the tobacco industry in African countries during the pandemic. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling and included employees of civil society organizations working in tobacco control or related fields, government officials and academics working in tobacco control in these countries. Interviews

were conducted in English or French languages and guided by an interview schedule. Interviews were conducted through online platforms like Teams, Zoom and WhatsApp. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically with the aid of the software NVivo version 12.

— **Results:** Findings from this study show that African countries were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic like the rest of the world. However, the tobacco industry exploited the pandemic and attempted to circumvent tobacco control in many of these countries during this time.

The industry largely and successfully used strategies like creating publicity stunts by announcing their interest to manufacture a COVID-19 vaccine made from the tobacco plant, making donations, litigation, and marketing their products through online platforms. CSOs in some countries needed to alert the government and the public through various channels about some of the ways the industry had sought to protect their business and launder their image during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tobacco control advocates also used the opportunity to reiterate the importance of tobacco control and tobacco use cessation. They found renewed motivation to continue the work of tobacco control advocacy during this period.

— **Recommendation:** The implementation of Article 5.3 in national tobacco control laws should become an important focus of tobacco control advocacy. This would guide government and industry interactions and prevent future tobacco industry interference. There is need for a special focus on tobacco use cessation support for tobacco users seeking to quit tobacco use during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Tobacco control advocates, governments and funders should use the opportunity of the pandemic to build strong cessation interventions to reduce tobacco use prevalence in SSA.

KEY WORDS :

Tobacco, Tobacco Control, COVID-19, tobacco industry monitoring, Africa, tobacco industry interference

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BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Globally, about 6 million people have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic started in 2020;¹ yet about 8 million people die from tobacco related diseases annually.² Tobacco use is the single preventable cause of death and disease in the world.³ Tobacco control is aimed at reducing tobacco use and the health risks associated with its use through policy and educational interventions.⁴

COVID-19 AND TOBACCO USE

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in China late 2019⁵ was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020 when it became evident that the disease was fast spreading around the world.⁶ With the pandemic status, many countries initiated measures to curb the spread of the virus in their locality and to curtail the devastating effects of a disease which left health systems overwhelmed and families in mourning.⁷

Early studies conducted in China showed that cigarette smokers were more at risk of severe disease outcome and death if they contracted COVID-19.⁸ There is conclusive evidence that smoking increases the risk for respiratory infections, weakens the immune system and is a major cause of chronic health conditions that increase the risk for COVID-19, including lung disease, heart disease and diabetes. Also, more recent studies have shown that smokers are at a higher risk of COVID-19 disease progression and mortality.^{9,10} Smokers have also been found to report more COVID-19 related symptoms than non-smokers.¹¹

Tobacco use is a risk factor for many non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), pneumonia, cardiovascular diseases and cancers.^{12,13} Tobacco use also exacerbates disease outcomes for many infectious diseases¹⁴ like HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Influenza and recently COVID-19. Other risk factors associated with disease severity and mortality for persons who have contracted COVID-19 include age, and the presence of co-morbidities like diabetes, various types of cancer, pneumonia, cardiovascular diseases, HIV, TB, asthma, and other respiratory diseases.¹⁵ Most of these co-morbidities are also tobacco-induced diseases¹⁶ or diseases exacerbated by tobacco use, for example HIV and TB.¹⁷

COVID-19 AND THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY: THREAT AND OPPORTUNITY

The World Health Organization (WHO) published a scientific brief reviewing the available evidence to ascertain the association between smoking and COVID-19 (latest edition 30 June 2020). Based on thirty-four peer reviewed publications the WHO concluded that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that smoking is associated with increased severity of disease and mortality in patients hospitalized for COVID-19.¹⁸

The tobacco industry appears to have seen the COVID-19 pandemic as both a threat and an opportunity. The industry saw the pandemic as a threat due to the growing evidence of the association between smoking and disease progression and mortality from COVID-19. This led to an increased number of smokers quitting around the world.¹⁹ In response to the association between smoking and COVID-19, the tobacco industry used diverse means to not only change the narrative about

the link between smoking and worsened disease outcome of COVID-19, but some researchers with a history of tobacco industry funding propagated a hypothesis that nicotine could be protective against SARS-CoV-2 infection.²⁰

The tobacco industry also saw the pandemic as an opportunity to push its agenda. In many countries around the world, including in Africa, citizens and corporate bodies were mobilized to assist government in cash or in-kind in the quest to address the health and economic challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The tobacco industry saw this as an opportunity to gain political currency and public sympathy by donating cash to governments' solidarity funds and donating medical supplies to the health sector of some countries.²¹ The industry also used the COVID-19 pandemic to market its products often offering scarce personal protective equipment (PPE) as incentives for product purchase.²¹ Such opportunities also include marketing of tobacco products through non-traditional channels to evade national legislations.²¹ Tobacco companies have seen and seized opportunities to improve their standing and social acceptability as responsible, life-saving entities, even though in reality, their products are life-taking to the magnitude of millions annually.

The actions of the tobacco industry are counterproductive to tobacco control and could undo some of the gains made in tobacco control over the years, especially as it relates to de-normalizing the tobacco industry and bans on tobacco product advertising, promotion, and sponsorships.

Unfortunately, in the dangerous irony, tobacco companies are taking advantage of COVID-19 public health campaigns to promote their products

Similarly, many countries took measures to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2 including placing the entire or parts of their country under lockdown. During the beginning of the lockdown, most countries only allowed the sale of essential goods and services. In a few countries, for example South Africa and Botswana (in Africa), tobacco products were excluded from the list of essential goods basically banning the sale of these products during this time.⁸ In order not to allow this precedence to be a norm which would further threaten their business, the tobacco industry in South Africa fought against the temporary ban on the sale of tobacco products through litigation.²²

Prior to this study, there has been no formal documentation or systematic inquiry into how COVID-19 may have impacted on tobacco control in Africa. Also, there has been no formal documentation of the activities of the tobacco industry to promote its agenda using COVID-19 as well as how governments and other stakeholders responded to the threat posed by industry activities to tobacco control on the African continent. This study focused on the Sub-Saharan region which forms the WHO AFRO region (except for the inclusion of Algeria).

This study aimed to investigate and monitor the activities (i.e., promotional) of the tobacco industry during the COVID-19 pandemic in African countries and to explore ways these activities may have impacted and/or undermined tobacco control efforts in the region. Tracking such activities of tobacco manufacturers is a key component of tobacco industry watch, especially in Africa where the tobacco industry has been known to ratchet up its marketing activities. Furthermore, the activities

and efforts of governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Sub-Saharan Africa to counter the tobacco industry during this period as well as the lessons learned for tobacco control were explored.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to investigate and document how tobacco control may have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa including how the tobacco industry may have exploited the COVID-19 pandemic to interfere with tobacco control in the continent.

IS IT WORTH IT?

Smoking increases your chances of suffering severe COVID-19 complications.



Stay Away. Keep Safe.

#StopTobaccoStopCorona

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

- 1** - What were the tobacco industry's promotional activities during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - i.** Which tobacco companies were operating in Africa during the pandemic?
 - ii.** How do the keywords and themes associated with tobacco companies' tweets compare during 2019 (before the pandemic) with those during the pandemic (2020-2021)?
- 2** - What is the current state of affairs and challenges faced by tobacco control in relation to COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- 3** - How has COVID-19 impacted lives and livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- 4** - How has the tobacco industry promoted its agenda during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- 5** - What has been the impact of the tobacco industry's efforts to promote its agenda during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- 6** - What efforts did WHO AFRO parties make to effectively implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) during the COVID-19 pandemic in the face of tobacco industry efforts to carry out #3 above?
- 7** - How have governments and civil society (and other stakeholders) in Sub-Saharan Africa responded to and/or countered tobacco industry efforts to carry out #3 above?
- 8** - What lessons are there to learn for tobacco control in Sub-Saharan Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A blend of the Policy Dystopia Model by Uluncanlar et al²³ and the six categories of tobacco industry interference identified by WHO was used as the frameworks to assess the tobacco industry's activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Policy Dystopia Model broadly categorizes tobacco industry strategies into discursive (argument-based) and instrumental (activity-based) strategies.

Discursive strategies are argument-based strategies such as the alarmist narratives used by the industry to exaggerate the potential cost of regulating tobacco products while dismissing or denying its potential benefits, while instrumental strategies are actions employed to influence policy-makers and other stakeholders (including the public) for or against regulating tobacco.²³

The WHO classifies tobacco industry interference into six categories:²⁴



METHODOLOGY

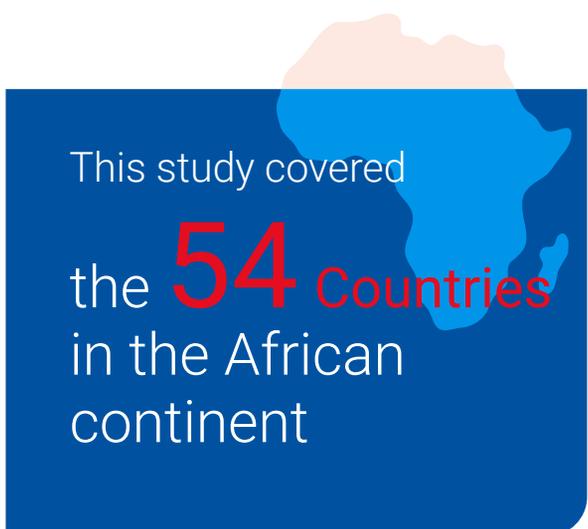
This study was conducted in two phases; therefore, some aspects of the methodology will be reported in two sections. This study was implemented in 2021.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative research design. This research design enabled the researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of the issues being investigated in the African countries using a triangulated approach.

First, a desktop review of available evidence on the internet (including social media) was sourced to ascertain the activities of the tobacco industry documented in published and grey literature as well as on social media. Secondly, key informant interviews were conducted with key stakeholders of tobacco control to collect information on firsthand experience of tobacco industry activities in various African countries.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY



This study covered
the **54 Countries**
in the African
continent

DATE COLLECTION PROCEDURE: PHASE 1

■ Market Scan of Tobacco Companies in Africa

We searched the Euromonitor database for manufacturing hubs in reported African countries. In addition, we searched Google with the following terms: “tobacco manufacturing company” AND “Africa”; “cigarette production” AND “Africa”; “cigarette manufacturing” AND “Africa”; “cigarette manufacturing” AND “[name for each of the 54 African countries]”; and “Africa/[country name]” AND “cigarette factory”. We visited the websites from these records to validate they were indeed tobacco manufacturing companies operating within Africa; we excluded suppliers, distributors, retailers, and other related companies not involved in direct manufacturing of processed tobacco products. From the website of each identified tobacco company, we retrieved information on name of company, the country, address, factory name (if available), and products as applicable.

■ Data Collection Method on Twitter and Other Social Media Outlets

We connected with the official Twitter application programming interface (API) using tweepy python package – a pull-based resource that replicates the functionality of Twitter’s built-in search function. To gather insight into what topics, hashtags or events tobacco companies were involved with during the assessed period, we used each tobacco company name as a search term and collected all related tweets – both those posted by the tobacco company as well as others posted by third parties but mentioning the tobacco company. Key data processing tasks were then performed, including tokenizing the tweets using the python NLTK library, which splits a stream of text into smaller units called tokens, usually words or phrases; @ mentions and #hashtags were first parsed using regular expressions (regex). Afterwards, stop words

were removed to prevent skewing the word clouds towards frequently occurring yet irrelevant articles, conjunctions, and adverbs. An array of custom stop words included in this analysis were: [‘The’, ‘what’, ‘You’, ‘Your’, ‘A’, ‘new’, ‘https’, ‘Hi’, ‘We’, ‘My’, ‘Now’, ‘please’, ‘get’]. Such stop words, while heavily used, do not add any meaningful information in data analysis where the aim is to find term frequencies; on the contrary, they might rather add noise to the data because of their highly frequent appearances. Careful attention was also given to punctuation marks and with terms like “RT” (used for re-tweets) and “via” (used to mention the original author of an article or a retweet), which are not in the default stop-word list. Also included as stop words were the search terms (i.e., names of tobacco companies), as these were only needed to get the tweets or query data from Twitter (i.e., collection words).

Term frequencies were derived as the number of words counted with respect to texts in whole tweets; this descriptive approach was used to ascertain the most common and most frequently used words, especially those that become trendy for the associated real-time event. To get the count of how many times each word appeared in the sample, we used built-in Python library collections: the “collection.Counter” object uses an algorithm that returns the most commonly used words as well as the number of times they are used. We analyzed the top keywords in all tweets in the year 2019 to those in 2020 and 2021 and created word clouds to summarize the data qualitatively.

We accessed images, pictures, and other related graphic material posted by tobacco companies on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media accounts. The aim was to graphically narrate activities of tobacco companies in relation to COVID-19, including but not limited to relief campaigns. In addition, we audited websites of each of the identified tobacco companies to see what kinds of advertising, promotional or sponsorship activities they engaged in during COVID-19.

■ Rapid review of tobacco industry activities in selected African countries from the published and grey literature

A rapid review was done for a targeted number of African countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Selection of these countries was based on judgmental sampling designed to ensure representation from countries across the diversity of tobacco industry presence (multinational and local companies), as well as varying tobacco use patterns and prevalence (predominant tobacco product types and use prevalence).

The purpose was to illustrate in these selected countries how tobacco companies engaged in pandemic –themed marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic even as health experts warned that smoking and vaping can increase risk of serious complications of COVID-19. The tactics of these companies in promoting cigarettes against all odds are hereby documented.

DATA COLLECTION: PHASE 2

■ Study participants

For this second phase, fifty-one key stakeholders from 17 countries in Africa were contacted (Appendix 1). However, only 23 participants from 12 countries were successfully interviewed. Participants included officials of civil society organizations working in tobacco control or related field, and other key stakeholders working in tobacco control. All participants declared no relationship with the tobacco industry.

■ Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Twenty-three (23) participants from 12 African countries took part in this study (Table 1). Participants comprised 5 females and 18 males with ages ranging from 25 to >65 years. The

highest level of education of this sample is PhD. Nineteen interviews were conducted in English while four interviews were conducted in French.

■ Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria: The inclusion criteria for this study included being an adult aged 18 and above, and a resident in one of the SSA countries, with at least two years' experience working in tobacco control.

Exclusion criteria: Participants below the age of 18 were not included in this study. Participants with links to the tobacco industry and persons non-resident in any of the SSA countries were also excluded from the study.

■ Sampling technique and research instrument

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants for this phase of the study. Participants who met the inclusion criteria were contacted email, SMS and phone calls. Key stakeholders were contacted telephonically and via emails using an initial list of civil society organizations from Africa Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA).

Snowball sampling was used to identify more potential participants based on recommendations from interviewed participants and other key stakeholders in tobacco control in the region. Interviews were semi-structured and guided by an interview guide (Appendix 2) which was developed by the researcher and derived from the key research questions guiding the study.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

	n (N=23)
Gender	
Female	5
Male	18
Country	
Zambia	2
Ghana	2
Nigeria	3
Kenya	3
Gambia	2
South Africa	1
Benin	2
Uganda	2
Tanzania	1
Mozambique	1
Senegal	3
Ivory Coast	1
Experience in Tobacco Control*	
2 – 4 years	3
5 – 10 years	1
11 – 15 years	9
16 – 19 years	1
20 + years	5
*4 participants did not indicate their years of experience. A list of countries where participants were initially contacted is contained in Appendix 3	

■ Collection of data

Key informants' interviews (KIIs) were conducted via online platforms most suitable to the participant including WhatsApp, Zoom, Teams and telephonically. All interviews were either conducted in English or French depending on the language of choice of the key informants. Participants were asked to fill a demographic form, which we used to create the demographic table. Interviews were also audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and the French interviews needing translation were translated to English.

■ Data analysis

Thematic analysis was carried out on the qualitative data with the aid of the software NVivo version 12. Qualitative data analysis involved reading and re-reading the transcripts and organizing the data initially guided by the interview schedule. To ensure credibility, participants were sent their transcripts to verify the transcribed interviews.

Coding of the data was informed by concepts in the interview schedule, the policy dystopia model, the six strategies of industry interference identified by the WHO, and new emergent themes from the interviews. Two researchers were involved in the analysis of data..

Reliability: To ensure reliability of this study, all interviews were audio recorded before transcribing. All interviews conducted in French were first transcribed verbatim and translated to English afterwards.

Validity: Validity in qualitative research means "appropriateness" of the tools, processes, and data.²⁵ This interview guide was reviewed and vetted through a scientific review process at South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) before approval by the ethics committee.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical clearance to conduct the second phase of the study was obtained in May 2021 from the SAMRC Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol ID: EC021-5/2021).

Information about the study was communicated through an information sheet/consent form (informed consent form) [Appendix 3] sent to participants prior to participating in the study after which participants were requested to indicate their intention to voluntarily participate in the study via an email or by signing the informed consent form and returning it to the consultant. Participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Participants were also assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study and that publication of the information shared would be de-identified except for their country names. Code names have been used for participants in this report to ensure anonymity. Audio recordings and transcribed data are stored in a passworded laptop only accessible to the principal investigator and research assistants.

MONITOR

Expose tobacco industry efforts to intervene in the COVID-19 crisis.



Advocates must be vigilant now

#StopTobaccoStopCorona

RESULTS

MARKET SCAN OF TOBACCO COMPANIES IN AFRICA

We identified 25 African countries with at least one local or multinational tobacco manufacturing company (Table 2). These were: Algeria, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte D'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. By company type, presence was as follows: British America Tobacco (Algeria, DR Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zambia); Imperial Tobacco (Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mali, Madagascar, Morocco, and Senegal), Japan Tobacco International (Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, and Tunisia); Philip Morris (Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa); and Eastern Tobacco Company (Egypt and Ethiopia). National tobacco companies included Tanzania Cigarette Company Ltd (Tanzania), Carnilinx (South Africa), United Tobacco Group (South Africa), Régie Nationale des Tabacs et des Allumettes (Tunisia), and Leaf Tobacco & Commodities Ltd (Uganda). Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa were the dominant manufacturing hubs for multinational tobacco companies in the African region, with products from these hubs exported to neighboring countries in the Western, Eastern, and Southern parts of Africa, respectively.

Table 2. Tobacco Companies in Africa

Country	Name	Factory/Brand name/Other comments
Algeria	British American Tobacco Algeria	
	Philip Morris Services S.A.	
	STAEM	STAEM's success can be attributed to the popularity of brands like Marlboro and L&M from Phillip Morris, Gauloise and West from Imperial Tobacco Group, and Winston and Camel from Japan Tobacco International (JTI)
	The state-owned Groupe MADAR (ex-SNTA)	
Botswana	Benson Craig (Pty) Ltd	
Burkina Faso	Imperial Tobacco	Manufacture Burkinabe de Cigarette SA
Central African Republic	Imperial Tobacco	Société Centrafricaine de Cigarettes SA
Chad	Imperial Tobacco	Manufacture de Cigarettes du Tchad SA
Congo	Imperial Tobacco	Société Industrielle et Agricole du Tabac Tropical SA
Côte D'Ivoire	Société Ivoirienne de Tabac SA (SITAB)	SITAB is the only domestic producer of cigarettes in Côte D'Ivoire. It produces the Fine, Excellence and Davidoff brands, among others
DR Congo	British American Tobacco	
Egypt	Eastern Tobacco Company	Produces its own large portfolio of economy brands, such as Cleopatra Golden King in cigarettes, Verona in cigarillos and Moassel Salloum in pipe tobacco
	Al Mansour	Licensed to manufacture the Time brand in the tobacco free zone new factory in Egypt.
	Al Nakhla Tobacco Co, which is now owned by Japan Tobacco Inc	Offers a wide range of brands of smoking (loose) tobacco, including Nakhla, Mizo and Fakhfakhina
Ethiopia	Eastern Tobacco Company	Eastern Tobacco Company or Eastern Co. is an Egyptian entity that signed an agreement with Ethiopia to plant tobacco in the East African country
	National Tobacco Enterprise	

Gabon	Imperial Tobacco	Société des Cigarettes Gabonaises SA
Ivory Coast	Imperial Tobacco	Société Ivoirienne des Tabacs SA
Kenya	Mastermind Tobacco Kenya Limited	
	British American Tobacco Nairobi	
	British American Tobacco	
Mali	Imperial Tobacco	Société Nationale des Tabacs et Allumettes du Mali
Madagascar	Imperial Tobacco Madagascar	
Morocco	Imperial Tobacco	Altadis Maroc
	Société Marocaines des Tabacs	Represents major cigarette brands, including Marquise, Davidoff and Gauloises
	Philip Morris Inc	Developed Marlboro Purple Mix
	Japan Tobacco Inc, represented in Morocco by North Africa Tobacco Co	Repackaged some products, especially some of its Winston product lines
	British American Tobacco Middle East & North Africa	Withdrew its Kent and Dunhill brands from sale in Morocco in 2019 because of tax increases. Future diversification or re-entry uncertain
Mozambique	Mozambique Leaf Tobacco	
	British American Tobacco Mozambique	
Nigeria	British America Tobacco Nigeria Limited (Bat)	
	Japan Tobacco International (JTI) Nigeria	
	PMINTL Nigeria (Philip Morris)	Producer of the Marlboro brand
	Black Horse Tobacco Co (KT&G Corp)	Producer of the Esse brand
Senegal	Philip Morris West Africa	
	Imperial Tobacco	Manufacture de Tabacs de l'Ouest Africain

South Africa	UNITED TOBACCO GROUP (PTY) LTD	
	MASTERMIND TOBACCO S A (PTY) LTD	
	British American Tobacco South Africa	Leading brands: Peter Stuyvesant, Princeton Pall Mall, Dunhill Courtleigh, Rothmans and Benson & Hedges
	JT International	Producer of Camel
	Philip Morris	Producer of Marlboro
	Carnilinx Tobacco Co	Local manufacturer
	Gold Leaf Tobacco Corp	Producer of brands such as Chicago and Voyager
Sudan	Afrah Tobacco and Cigarette Factory	
	JTI Sudan	
Tanzania	Tanzania Cigarette Company Limited (TCC)	
	MASTERMIND TOBACCO (T) LIMITED	
Tunisia	JT International Tunisia S.A.	
	Régie Nationale des Tabacs et des Allumettes (RNTA)	State-owned producer (dominant player)
	Manufacture des Tabacs de Kairouan (MTK)	State-owned producer
Uganda	Leaf Tobacco & Commodities (U) Ltd,	The only domestic tobacco company in Uganda. Producer of the popular Supermatch brand of cigarettes
Zambia	British American Tobacco Zambia	
	Roland Imperial Tobacco	
Zimbabwe	Mashonaland Tobacco Company	
	Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board Zimbabwe	
	Pacific Cigarette Company	
	Shasha Tobacco	

THEMES OF TOBACCO INDUSTRY TWEETS BEFORE VS DURING COVID-19

Word cloud thematic analysis showed a dramatic shift in themes associated with industry tweets before vs during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, most of the tweets were associated with descriptors of tobacco products, companies or activities (e.g., “cigarettes”, or “multinational”, “corporate”, “industry marketing”, “marketing season”), tobacco company executives (e.g., “Wilfred Murungi”), value chain activities (“revenue”, “trade”, “manufacturer”), and key stakeholders (e.g., “government”, “farmers”, “workers”, “young [people]”). The three most re-occurring words in pre-COVID-19 tweets were “marketing”, “cigarettes”, and “murungi”.



During the COVID-19 pandemic however, the key themes surrounding tobacco industry tweets were health-related ones. The three most frequently occurring words in tweets associated with the industry were “COVID-19”, “vaccine”, and “pandemic”.

One of the most surprising developments during the pandemic related to tobacco industry corporate social responsibility was the announcement by BAT that they were working on research and development for a “plant-based COVID-19 vaccine using tobacco leaves” (Figure 3).

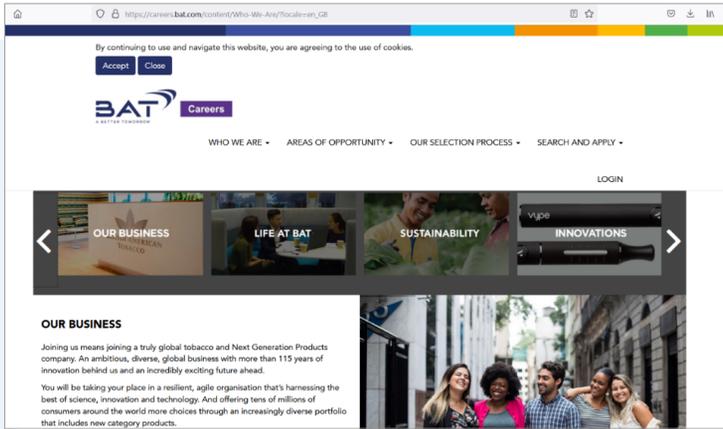
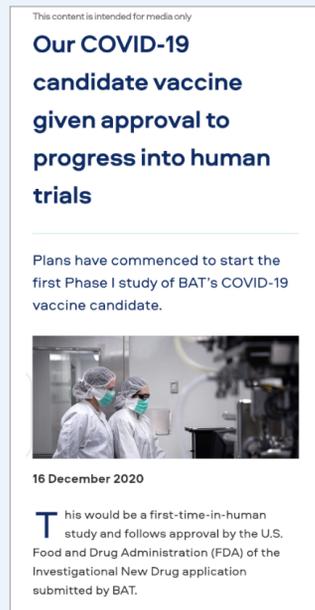


Figure 3. Announcements of efforts to develop an “innovative, plant-based vaccine” from tobacco leaves by British American Tobacco



This tactic by the industry is cunning as it simultaneously achieves multiple marketing elements:

- 1 it instills perceptions that tobacco leaves are endogenously healthy or have health attributes;
- 2 it generates earned media through tweets and retweets as well as through mentions on other media – a key part of product advertising;
- 3 it positions the industry as being interested in saving lives and improving wellbeing of the general population, even if they knew the probability of the vaccine ever completing research and development was low. Excerpts of the public’s reactions towards this vaccine development efforts are shown below. As can be seen in Table 3, some of these tweets were from large media entities with extensive reach, including radio stations (@Radio702), TV stations (e.g., @CNBCJulianna, @DailyNewsEgypt).

Table 3. Selected tweets from the media and general public in response to claims from British American Tobacco company of being involved in research and development for COVID-19 vaccine

User	Tweet	Likes
@carlquintanilla	British American Tobacco says that it has made a significant breakthrough in developing a potential plant-based vaccine for the coronavirus and hopes to manufacture up to three million doses per week by June. \$BTI #COVID19	249
@CNBCJulianna	I can't say I saw this coming... British American Tobacco working on #COVID19 vaccine using tobacco leaves	32
@QuintFit	Cigarette maker British American Tobacco (BAT) has claimed it is ready to test its #COVID19 #vaccine using proteins from tobacco leaves.	29
@jameshodcroft	British American Tobacco are working on a cure for #COVID19... does it not strike anyone else as ironic that one of our greatest hopes rests with a company with the initials BAT?	26
@MarewaGlover	If it is the only effective #COVID19 vaccine, will you take it even though it was developed by British American Tobacco?	24
@Radio702	"We warned and cautioned government that the black market has a dynamic supply chain and it will capitalise on the lockdown." Johnny Moloto, External affairs South African head - British American Tobacco #COVID19 #21dayslockdown	21
@Kamsid66	Is this an example of #CSR ? Why can't we grow #Covid19 antigen in any plant other than tobacco? @FCTCofficial @ravimehro British American Tobacco working on plant-based coronavirus vaccine	16
@pauldashworth	BREAKTHROUGH: British American Tobacco claims #Covid19 vaccine breakthrough using tobacco plants. Its US based biotech business has been working on a potential vaccine for #coronavirus, which it believes could offer up to 3M doses a week from June.	8
@lmstroud89	Hmmm. Interesting, British American Tobacco & their latest on producing a vaccine for #COVID19 using tobacco leaves.	8
@judegomila	Virus-like particle plant-based COVID19 vaccine candidate from British American Tobacco using Nicotiana benthamiana. A very interesting rebranding for the tobacco industry to become biotech heroes...	7
@avfcray	Benson & Hedges owner British American Tobacco has a #COVID19 #vaccine in pre-clinical testing	5
@Jgray3Gs	British American Tobacco developing a vaccine for Covid19 using tobacco plants. Being done at a Kentucky Bio Processing here in Owensboro, Kentucky.	5
@foodformzansi	COVID-19 VACCINE: Pharmaceutical companies across the globe are racing to develop vaccines for #covid19. Now, a new player has entered the arena: British American Tobacco. The tobacco company has announced that its #vaccine is ready for trials.	5

@KnowSciencePH	British American Tobacco is working on #COVID19 vaccine using tobacco plant technology which is now in pre-clinical testing. They cloned a portion of #SARSCoV2 genetic sequence which led to a potential antigen. More here: https://bit.ly/2xldzzf #KnowTheSciencePH	4
@Yeswal_	British American Tobacco (BAT) has announced it is now ready to test its potential coronavirus #COVID19 vaccine. http://thedailymail.co.ke/bat-announces-progress-on-the-covid-19-vaccine/ @BatKenya @BATPress	4
@charlieeasmon	I am not a fan of conspiracy theories but am I really hearing that British American tobacco are developing a #COVID19 #vaccine ? because 1) it's bizarre & 2) a disease creating company creating a disease solution? & 3) no doubt for profit?	3
@armchairnomad	With all these tobacco control crusaders criticizing PMI, and now British American Tobacco, for trying to help during #covid19, you'd think tobacco companies were giving ventilators and working on #vaccines that deliver tobacco smoke to sick patients.	3
@RobSnowCreative	Is it only me that sees the irony in this: The British American Tobacco organisation say they are close to a vaccine for Covid-19. And what is their acronym?	3
@GondaiMutongi	British American Tobacco (BAT) is working on a plant-based #COVID19 vaccine. BAT is a major producer of tobacco products in Zimbabwe https://theguardian.com/business/2020/apr/01/british-american-tobacco-plant-based-coronavirus-vaccine?CMP=share_btn_tw	2
@dylandover	What? Is British American Tobacco actually jealous that something other than one of their own products is causing people respiratory distress? #CoronavirusPandemic #COVID19	2
@Roshnijoshi	The juxtaposition of BAT attempting to SAVE lives. Imagine. Is this where #PritiPatel has been meddling during the govt #covid19 effort? British American Tobacco working on plant-based coronavirus vaccine	2
@BioMed_21	Repurposing tobacco...British American Tobacco are using plant technology to accelerate development of a #COVID19 vaccine- claiming that the product will be safer, (tobacco plants can't host human pathogens), quicker and stable at room temperature. http://ow.ly/knEA50za2JJ	2
@afeye	A cigarette a day keeps #covid19 away. #BAT British American Tobacco Working on COVID-19 Vaccine Using Tobacco Leaves https://nyti.ms/2QYQ4Z6	1

@bushravage	sell you the demise in lung health and sell you the subsequent cure to lung attacking virus which came from bats and British American TobaccoBATthis has go to be April Fool's ? #AprilFoolsDay #COVID19	1
@JHUCIR	British American Tobacco working on @coronavirus vaccine using tobacco leaves https://nypost.com/2020/04/01/british-american-tobacco-working-on-coronavirus-vaccine/? #COVID19 utm_source=twitter_sitebuttons&utm_medium=site%20buttons&utm_campaign=site%20buttons via @nypost	1
@The_Optics	As Ethiopians turn to traditional herbs for Covid19 cure,British American Tobacco turns to tobacco extracts in same quest for vaccine. @DrAlfredMutua's challenge to Kenyan PhDs holders to confront this threat as my friend Prof Obel did with HIV stands	1
@Consumer_GD	British American #Tobacco to utilize tobacco leaves in new potential #COVID19 vaccine, says GlobalData #BAT #BritishAmericanTobacco #vaccines	1
@gemmadurany	British American Tobacco working on a potential #covid19 vaccine.	1
@DailyNewsEgypt	British American Tobacco announces progress on #COVID19 vaccine http://ow.ly/HIFc30qHXXq	1

Besides these claims of “health” engagement, JTI positioned itself as supporting economic recovery for tobacco farmers from COVID-19 by “increasing its procurement of locally produced tobacco to support local growers reeling from the economic impact of #COVID19PH”. JTI in Malawi stressed that it is “committed to improving local people’s access to health especially in rural areas”, following the company’s handover of 15 clinics worth K650 million to Malawi’s Ministry of Health ²⁶. When BAT claimed to have made a “significant breakthrough” in developing a potential vaccine for COVID-19 using tobacco leaves, the aim was to position itself as a company that cares in order to influence public perception of the company and its products. The tobacco industry will often influence individuals through the ‘sponsorship of events and reports on illicit trade’ to influence key stakeholders.

These CRS activities often enable the tobacco industry to influence public opinion about itself.

A twitter user (@armchairnomad) criticized tobacco control advocates for speaking against “PMI, and now British American Tobacco, for trying to help during #COVID-19”. The External Head of Affairs at BAT spoke out against illicit trade, claiming that the company had ‘warned the government’ about the black market.

RAPID REVIEW OF TOBACCO INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES FROM THE PUBLISHED AND GREY LITERATURE

Le table 4. presents a summary of tobacco industry activities as documented in published and grey literature.

Table 4. presents a summary of tobacco industry activities as documented in published and grey literature		
Country	Indicators highlighting the interference of TI during Covid-19	Country-specific recommendations
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tobacco industry-related CSR activities High level government officials endorsed tobacco-related CSR activities. Japan Tobacco International (JTI), for example, presented E\$4 million for community projects in Egypt. The Eastern Company donated E\$3million to restore the National Cancer institute. 	<p>Although Egypt prohibits all forms of advertising and promotion, its tobacco legislation does not explicitly prohibit sponsorship and donations from the tobacco industry.</p> <p>Therefore, the country needs a law that will ban all forms of sponsorship to reduce and limit tobacco industry interference.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits given to the Tobacco Industry International travelers brought into Cairo duty free: 200 cigarettes, 25cigars or 200g of tobacco. Palm Fume Company (JTI) has its headquarters located in Shebin El-Koum Free Zone. In addition, PMI negotiated with the government to allow sales of IQOS 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unnecessary interaction with the Tobacco Industry Senior officials continued to engage with the tobacco industry in situations that endorsed and promoted their business. For example, in 2019, JTI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Egyptian Customs Authority to combat illicit trade in tobacco products. In that same year, PMI held a three-day technical training course for customs officials in 3 of the 4 urban governorates as part of continuous cooperation between the company and the Customs Authority to address the smuggling of tobacco products 	

Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance of Donations of PPE and Money from Tobacco Companies A report by Assunta (2020) shows that since the beginning of 2020, the Ethiopia government has been accepting donations of personal protective equipment, medical supplies, and money from tobacco companies. Even though these companies produce products that increase the risk of contracting COVID 	<p>All forms of tobacco sponsorship and financial contributions by the tobacco industry are prohibited. However, as mentioned, the Ethiopian government received donations of PPE from the tobacco industry thereby violating their own tobacco control laws.</p> <p>Better enforcement of the laws is required, and government officials need to be held accountable when they break the law.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry participation in policy development The agreement of the government of Ethiopia with JTI, major shareholder of the NTE during privatization allowed commenting before any tobacco related law is processed. Due to this, the tobacco industry was able to exert pressure on public health laws particularly the recent excise tax law 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tobacco industry-related CSR activities In 2019, NTE still partly owned by the government, participated in Go-Green, the green legacy national environmental campaign scheme officially launched by Ethiopia's Prime Minister 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits given to the tobacco industry Government officials showed their strong support for the success of JTI Ethiopia. The Ministry of Revenue and Prime Minister Office gave a platinum recognition award to the NTE for being a loyal and high taxpayer. State minister of the Ministry of Finance, Dr Eyob Tealegn, referred to the high illicit trade that was produced by the NTE as a reason not to impose the required amount of excise tax. As a result, a low excise tax has been imposed by newly legislated excise tax proclamation no. 118/2020. In addition, in 2019, there was no tax increase on tobacco in Ethiopia (Global Tobacco Interference Index 2020) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unnecessary interaction with the tobacco industry Proclamation 1112/2019 forbids the government from accepting any assistance from the tobacco industry on any enforcement activities or entering any partnership with it. However, the Custom Commission, under the Ministry of Revenue signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NTE/JTI to fight illicit trade in June 2019. Using this advantage, the NTE is aggressively promoting its products in the Eastern part of the country where illicit trade is assumed to be higher, using a display frame with a sign that depicts a list of NTE products, to fight contraband products. 	

Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploitation by Tobacco Industry to gain favour for policy interference Tobacco companies like BAT continually employed a variety of tactics to hinder policy progress in Kenya including lobbying and engaging senior policymakers, exerting influence through third parties and trade committees, and filing legal claims. For example, in 2019, Nairobi City Council Tobacco Bill was passed. The bill proposed restrictions on retail outlets, rules governing secondhand smoke, provision of health and cessation services and regulation of interaction between public officials and the tobacco companies. Companies such as BAT described the bill as a case of 'overregulation', saying that points of sale restrictions were 'extreme' and would have 'unintended consequences' for small businesses like 'harassment and arrests'. The acting CEO of the Nairobi branch of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce stated that the bill had the potential to increase illicit trade and sale of substandard goods, therefore posing a huge problem for the industry and the country at large'. 	<p>The 2019 Nairobi City Council Tobacco Bill regulates the interaction between government officials and tobacco companies.</p> <p>It is important for government officials at all levels to not only implement this bill but to enforce it as well and be held accountable if they fail to do so.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to the government The tobacco industry has a history of establishing high level political links with the government and using these links to promote its business agenda. BAT has enjoyed strong political relationships with successive Kenyan presidents and has been establishing links with a variety of ministers and appointing influential politicians as non-executive directors. For example, in September 2020 Rita Kavashe was appointed chair of the board of BAT Kenya. At the time, Kavashe was serving as a member of the delivery board of Kenya Vision 2030 alongside government officials, including representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Office of the President (tobaccotactics.org). In addition, the Deputy President graced the gala dinner for the winners of the 2019 Kenyan Exporter of the Year Awards where BAT Kenya was awarded the 'Solid Rock Commendation awards'. Alongside the Deputy President, the Cabinet Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives and the Export Promotion Council (EPC) Chief Executive Officer were in attendance with other government officials. The Kenya 'Exporter of the Year Award' is a project of Kenya EPC, as state agency. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interference and CSR during COVID-19 Pandemic In Kenya, BAT contributed 300,000 liters of free sanitizers to government agencies in exchange of favours down the road. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kenyan government designated tobacco as an essential product. BAT also donated 10.6million Shillings (KSh) to the Kenyan government as National COVID relief fund 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax Exemptions In September 2020, Business Daily reported that BAT had opened talks with the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) to have its nicotine pouches exempted from excise duty for up to three years, and then for it to be taxed at a lower rate than cigarettes. BAT managing Director Beverley Spencer-Obatoyinbo was quoted as saying that this exemption was reasonable 'due to the size of foreign direct investment' and referred to BAT establishing exports of the product. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance of Donations from the tobacco industry by government officials Although government officials are not allowed to endorse or accept donations from the tobacco industry, they accepted a donation from the industry to the COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund established by the President. There was deterioration in unnecessary interactions while there has been no progress in the implementation of preventive measures as Kenya waits for its Cabinet to prescribe a code of conduct for public officials (Global Tobacco Interference Index 2020). 	

<p>Malawi</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSR activities by tobacco industries As Malawi has not signed the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), there is no legal barrier to interaction between tobacco companies and the government. Tobacco companies regularly publicized their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities including the construction of schools and donation to organizations as a strategy to address child labor or for disaster relief Interaction and cooperation with the tobacco industry Arguments about the importance of tobacco growing to Malawi’s economy were used by Malawian politicians to justify continued interaction and cooperation with the tobacco industry. For example, in his September 2020 State of the Nation’s address, President Chakwera said ‘while tobacco remains Malawi’s primary export and a key form of income for many Malawians, the crop is unlikely to provide a sustainable source of income in the longer-term given a decline in the global demand. By working with tobacco companies, we can help blend other crop types into the famers’ mix over time. Diversification efforts such as this can contribute significantly to household food security while supporting the establishment of a more resilient agricultural system. This is especially important given the resources, expertise and strong domestic and international networks which tobacco companies can offer’. The government of Malawi has also engaged with the tobacco industry on tobacco pricing and foreign investment. 	<p>Malawi should ratify the WHO FCTC in order to create boundaries for the interaction between tobacco companies and government officials.</p> <p>The country should revise its tobacco legislation in order to ban all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.</p> <p>The government should investigate an alternative for tobacco farmers as well.</p>
<p>Nigeria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquiring credibility through CSR efforts Tobacco companies have been using CSR in Nigeria to continue to highlight their contribution to the fight against COVID-19. For example, the British American Tobacco Nigeria Foundation (BATNF) sponsored and supported several CSR activities and programmes that were endorsed by the government. BAT also has 180 programmes across 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) endorsed by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, the International Tobacco Company donated PPE to government efforts. Industry participation in policy development There is substantial evidence that the tobacco industry participated in policy development. The process leading to the approval of the National Tobacco Control Regulation 2019 had the industry participate actively. They submitted memoranda, made submissions, and sent a high-powered delegation to the public hearing at the National Assembly. The Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) also involved and continues to involve the industry during the standards setting processes. Procedure for transparency measures Nigeria has policies and laws that clearly support transparency and accountability on dealings with the tobacco industry, including the National Tobacco Control Act 2015 and the National Tobacco Control Regulations 2019. The problem lies in their effective implementation and enforcement. For example, evidence reveals that States and Federal Government officials held meetings and interactions with the tobacco industry without publicly disclosing any details.²⁷ Section 25 of the National Tobacco Control Act was clear on the interactions between the government and the tobacco industry, stipulating that all meetings should be conducted in a transparent manner and details must be made readily available to the public. An effective implementation of tobacco control policies will prevent interactions that are antithetical to the standards of transparency and probity while dealing with the tobacco industry. 	<p>Implementation and enforcement of the 2015 National Tobacco Control Act by enforcement officials.</p> <p>The act regulates any form of tobacco advertising, promotion and packaging and smoke free areas.</p>

<p>South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing of tobacco and tobacco products Although tobacco companies are banned from advertising their products in South Africa, they exploited loopholes in the legislation during the pandemic to market their next generation products through social media promotions. The tobacco industry heavily marketed these products as 'reduced harm'. According to Dyk (2020), journalists and influencers were provided with all-expenses paid trips to cover tobacco products at major events with the objective of promoting tobacco products. <p>A recent study by Agaku and colleagues showed targeted and persistent efforts by e-cigarette manufacturers in South Africa to continue marketing e-cigarettes even when the South African government imposed a ban on the sale of tobacco products. Swart (2020) reports that because of the lockdown ban on the sale of tobacco products, tobacco companies launched lawsuits which included the assertion that cigarettes were "essential goods". The Fair Independent Tobacco Association (FITA), an organization representing 80% of cigarette manufacturers in South Africa brought forward a court application on May 4 against the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. FITA said there is no rational connection between the cigarette ban and the aim of the state of disaster declaration which is to prevent the spread of COVID-19.</p> <p>The Pretoria High Court dismissed FITA'S challenge on 26th June 2020 ruling that the Minister acted reasonably with a view to save lives when she banned tobacco products. FITA was granted the right to appeal and FITA's president, Sinenhlanhla Mnguni said that by banning tobacco, the government went against the main objective of lockdown, which is to prevent people from moving around, pushing them out to go and seek cigarettes on the black market, a trade that increased sharply over recent months. It now seeks an order prohibiting the government from banning tobacco sales again, should South Africa move to a stricter lock-down in future.</p>	<p>The passing of the 2018 Tobacco bill will regulate the promotion, advertising and sponsorship of e-cigarettes.</p> <p>The country should regulate the interactions government officials have with the tobacco industry</p>
<p>Tanzania</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax exemption The tobacco industry received a range of incentives that benefitted its business. Tax exemptions, no increase in tobacco tax and lower levels of taxation on certain tobacco products were among the common benefits given to the tobacco industry. For example, in 2019, there was no tax increase on tobacco in Tanzania and Tanzania Cigarette Company (TCC) attributed its good performance partly to the decision of the government not to increase excise duty of cigarettes in the budget speech of 2018/2019 financial year, as per their request <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donations by tobacco companies The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was involved in handing out school bags to grade school students and supplying trolley push carts to street vendors respectively, both sponsored by tobacco companies 	<p>Alternative economic activity is required for Tanzania in order to reduce the influence the tobacco industry has over the country's economy.</p> <p>Government officials and policymakers should be educated about the health and economic impact the tobacco industry has on Tanzania's economy.</p> <p>The country should adopt a comprehensive FCTC-compliant law</p>

<p>Uganda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violation of the FCTC articles Industry tactics to undermine the Tobacco Control Act included: ‘blackmailing’ politicians, employing front groups and third parties to further the industry agenda, violating FCTC articles by directly engaging politicians and influencing policy making through trade committees and farmers organizations. For example, in 2019, the Ugandan Ministry of Trade passed a draft of proposed tobacco regulations to British American Tobacco Uganda (BATU). This resulted in a letter from BATU providing input on the proposed regulations, which generated conflicts of interest and violated the FCTC Tobacco Company CSR during the COVID-19 Pandemic In December 2020, a joint Ugandan/British public health research project reported a donation of US\$65,000 to the National COVID-19 task force in Uganda by the tobacco industry. In addition, Tribert Rujugiro Ayabatwa (Meridian Tobacco Company) gave US \$70,000 to government to combat COVID-19. BATU: A major Player in Uganda’s Tobacco Industry BATU, a subsidiary of British American Tobacco (BAT) has been a major driver of Uganda’s tobacco industry. In 2020, the company had a near monopoly on Uganda’s tobacco market, with 51.7% of overall volume sales (euromonitor data). 	<p>Politicians in Uganda should be educated about the consequence of engaging with the tobacco industry. The implementation and enforcement of tobacco control policies should regulate the interactions that they have with the industry.</p>
<p>Zambia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tobacco Industry-related CSR Media reports often glamorize the tobacco industry through the reporting of their CSR activities including building clinics and schools, sinking boreholes, and building maternity annexes. As one example of how the tobacco industry uses CSR to benefit its reputation, JTI made a US\$300,000 donation to health facilities and schools in Zambia in June 2020 during the COVID pandemic. Benefits given to the tobacco industry The government of the Republic of Zambia has opened a multi-facility zone and two new cigarette manufacturing plants were opened in these facilities. For setting up these plants, the government offered a five-year tax incentive of 0%. One is owned by British American Tobacco (BAT) Zambia, while the other is owned by Roland Imperial Tobacco. Unnecessary interaction with the tobacco industry In November 2019, the Finance Minister of Zambia, Dr Bwalya N’gandu opened a cigarette manufacturing plant owned by BAT and further urged more investment in the sector 	<p>An alternative to tobacco farming should be proposed by the Zambian government. As the tobacco industry claims that tobacco farming is a source of employment and revenue.</p> <p>The Zambian government should adhere to guidelines provided by the WHO FCTC.</p>

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policy delay

Tobacco companies have lobbied to delay, prevent, and influence the passing of tobacco control policies in many African countries.

The tobacco industry utilises corporate social responsibility to influence and cover up the true harm of the use of tobacco products.

In Kenya the tobacco industry employs several tactics to hinder policy progress including lobbying and engaging senior officials in government. Table 4 presents an incident where the BAT Managing Director commented on the tabling of the 2019 Nairobi City Council Tobacco Bill which sought to regulate the interactions between the tobacco industry and public officials. The statement by BAT was a delay tactic used to slow down the progress and passing of the bill. Delays orchestrated by the tobacco industry translate to more people being less protected by effective policies and more people being vulnerable to the effect of the harms caused by tobacco products.

Donations and CSR activities

The Ethiopian government accepted donations from the tobacco industry for personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic. For a country like Malawi which has not ratified the WHO FCTC and has weak tobacco control legislation, they become more vulnerable to tobacco industry manipulation and interference as they do not have a legal barrier to interacting with the tobacco

industry. Due to a lack of strong tobacco control policies that will prohibit tobacco advertising and promotion in Malawi the industry is able to publicise their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Nigeria ratified the WHO FCTC in 2005, however, the smoking prevalence in the country continues to increase. The 2015 National Tobacco Control Act (NTC) prohibits tobacco advertising, promotion and partially bans sponsorship and publicity of sponsorships. However, the tobacco industry continues to find and exploit loopholes in the country's tobacco control policies. The tobacco industry continues to highlight their CSR contributions especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The exploitation of global challenges by the industry needs to be noted and mitigated against to prevent future occurrence.

Tax Exemption

The industry is always eager to mention its economic contributions especially in African countries. Due to these 'economic benefits', tobacco companies in countries like Tanzania and Zambia are provided tax exemptions.

It is important for countries to realize that the 'economic benefit' of the tobacco industry is a deficit when the harms caused by the products are evaluated against such benefits.

REPORTS OF INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES FROM TOBACCO CONTROL STAKEHOLDERS IN AFRICA

This section highlights accounts of tobacco industry interference during the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting impact, from tobacco control actors in their respective countries.

Table 5. Summary of reports from key stakeholders in tobacco control in Africa

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	SUB SUB-THEMES
1. Impact of COVID-19 in SSA	a. Economic and social impact b. Impact on the healthcare system	
2. State of affairs of Tobacco Control	a. Opportunities brought about by COVID-19 b. Advocacy work continuing as usual in some countries	
3. Challenges faced by tobacco control in Sub-Saharan Africa during the pandemic	a. Tobacco industry promoting incorrect information b. Inability of some advocacy organizations to function optimally c. Reduced contact with community members d. Concerns about increased exposure of the population to secondhand smoke e. Slower pace of policy implementation f. Impact on advocacy plans and financial challenges for advocacy organizations	
4. Tobacco industry activities/efforts to promote its agenda during COVID-19	a. Activities (instrumental strategies)	1) Maneuvering to hijack the political and legislative process; 2) Exaggerating the economic importance of the industry; 3) Manipulating public opinion to gain the appearance of respectability 4) Fabricating support through front groups 5) Discrediting proven science 6) Intimidating governments with litigation
	b. Arguments (discursive strategies)	1) Maneuvering to hijack the political and legislative process; 2) Exaggerating the economic importance of the industry; 3) Manipulating public opinion to gain the appearance of respectability 4) Fabricating support through front groups 5) Discrediting proven science 6) Intimidating governments with threats of litigation.
	c. No activities recorded or no evidence of any activities	

5. Impact of tobacco Industry efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa	a. Impact on government b. Impact on the public c. Impact on the work of tobacco control advocates	
6. The tobacco industry's business during the pandemic	a. Tobacco products listed as essential and sold cheaper b. Tobacco listed as non-essential items (South Africa) c. The tobacco business may have lost some grounds d. No change in the tobacco business	
7. Government and CSOs countering /responding to tobacco industry interference initiatives	a. Government efforts b. CSO efforts	
8. Efforts of WHO Afro parties to implement the FCTC and/or ITP		
9. Lessons learnt during the pandemic	a. Innovative tactics of the tobacco industry b. Collaboration of tobacco control stakeholders is important c. The importance of strong legislation d. An opportunity to advance tobacco control policy	

1. IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN SUB SAHARAN AFRICA

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the SSA countries was negative, similar to the rest of the world. Sectors like the economy, healthcare, education, and basic livelihoods were impacted heavily by the pandemic. Participants described the pandemic as “a health crisis that has destabilized our economies” (Benin_02). In Gambia the impact of the pandemic was described as “huge”. According to a participant from Gambia “the Covid-19 has affected everything.” (Gambia_01).

■ a. Economic and social impact

The issues brought by COVID-19 ranged from job losses to children failing to go to school due to schools being closed. According to a participant from Ghana_01, “...generally we also have issues where schools locked down, so children were at home – they were home for about 6 months or so”. In addition to being mostly at home during this time, parents were also mostly at home which in turn made it difficult for parents to provide for their families.

■ b. Impact on the healthcare system

The healthcare system was largely impacted in Sub-Saharan Africa during this time, revealing the weaknesses of this sector. One participant from Kenya reported,

“most critical and maybe obvious is the health system, COVID has exposed the very under belly of our health systems in the country. Because of the fact that the health facilities are struggling to keep up with what we have, obviously we are not as bad as we hear happening in other

countries, like Brazil and all that. But still, our systems are not ready and never were ready for a pandemic like this.” (Kenya_03)

In Nigeria, healthcare during the onset of COVID-19 was reported to be expensive.

“people were not able to access even the primary health care center. They couldn’t. And even the private healthcare centers were very expensive, never mind to even get essential drugs, that was a challenge to people.” (Nigeria_03)

It was reported by one participant from Tanzania that many lives were lost during this time, the impact of COVID-19 was so bad that it led to a shortage of coffins in Tanzania. One participant recalled a speech given by an official from the prime minister’s office in Tanzania.

“COVID-19 is there and its serious, and it was being said that they are now short of coffins, you know, I remember him saying that. You know, when a leader from a higher office says that you know what it means, we are running short of coffins.” (Tanzania_01)

In some other countries however, participants expressed that the death rate was not as severe as projected. A Beninese reported that “We actually have 66 under treatments and 8000 cured and 104 deaths. So, in Benin Republic, it has not been so severe like in other places” (Benin_01). In countries like South Africa though, the effect of the pandemic was worse. A South African participant reported, “It’s almost like we are boiling, we are getting to the boiling point bit by bit, the pandemic has just quickened the pace for unrest in the country.” (SA_01).

2. STATE OF AFFAIRS OF TOBACCO CONTROL IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The COVID-19 pandemic was a new thing being experienced by the world. Therefore, it brought about some challenges and opportunities for tobacco control which had to be either addressed or adjusted to. Participants were of the view that the pandemic was both an opportunity and threat to tobacco control in SSA.

■ a. Opportunities brought about by COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presented the tobacco control community the opportunity to consolidate their work in this field. Of particular importance was the need to enlighten the public about the dangers of smoking and the association between COVID-19 disease severity and smoking. The tobacco control community leveraged on the link between tobacco smoking and COVID-19 disease severity to motivate people to quit smoking.

“A good reason to believe in our fight and to continue the fight”

The pandemic brought renewed motivation for the work the advocates were doing for tobacco control as described by one participant from Cote d'Ivoire.

“Well, I think that with the arrival of COVID, there has been an emphasis, since the pandemic represented COVID-19 being also one of the reasons for us to justify why we really had to fight against tobacco, as I said, while the link was demonstrated that with tobacco the immune system weakened and that tobacco cause COVID-19 to worsen. So, from this point of view for us advocates we had a good reason to believe in our fight and to continue the fight.” (Cote D'Ivoire _01).

Encouraged messaging and communication to the public about quitting tobacco use

The pandemic also provided a good motivation to discourage people from smoking. However, the temporary ban of the sale of tobacco products in South Africa brought both an opportunity to get people to quit and attracted more push back from both the industry and the public.

“The pandemic allowed us to communicate a lot because the study had shown us that when you smoke cigarette you are at risk to develop more severe forms of diseases. These are the information that people need to know. And when you communicate on it, you take advantage of the covid pandemic to also speak of the message that's needed to communicate it and bring it to the highest level etc.” (Senegal_01).

“I think the opportunity is when there was a ban on tobacco sales and e-cigarettes. I think that was an opportunity because the numbers showed that there are a number of people who stopped smoking. But that also came with increased push back from the tobacco industry.” (SA_01).

More opportunity to engage with government

The pandemic seemed to have provided the tobacco control community with more opportunities to engage with government about tobacco control.

“What we did currently, is engagements/ meetings...have to engage with the government... it really put the government on its alert and that has actually helped,

and I must say that tobacco is, if not reduced to the minimum or to the least levels, I must say that tobacco is more of, a little bit invisible in Ghana.” (Ghana_02)

■ **b. Advocacy work continuing as usual in some countries**

Some participants reported that the pandemic did not bring about much change in the state of affairs of tobacco control as their work of sensitizing the public and pushing for effective policies continued as usual.

“...actually, it hasn’t been different from the past because it is normal for the civil society to sensitize about tobacco and COVID. But the government hasn’t put in much enforcement or much value to protect its citizens by putting in measures to protect the smokers and also the exposure to tobacco smoke. It’s the same, hasn’t changed anything.” (Zambia_01)

“Well, I can say that the current status is that, as I said, that we are very busy in working on tobacco control legislation.” (Mozambique_01)

3. CHALLENGES FACED BY TOBACCO CONTROL IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA DURING THE PANDEMIC

During the pandemic the world had to adjust to the new normal, which was not as easy as many persons had hoped. The tobacco control community in some SSA countries also experienced challenges like an increased effort of the industry to promote its agenda.

“But let me say that there were a lot of concerns because people were complaining about job losses, then also employees also complained that they couldn’t make a lot of sales, a lot of impact as far as Covid-19 was concerned. Even so we’ve had our own challenges, of working from home, which affected our way because not many understood the new trend of working from home and then having a connection with the internet to be able to work effectively.” (Ghana_01)

“So the tobacco industry has continued to expand its market during this Corona time, it has continued to make a lot of profits, it has continued to market their products online, because now most people are online. And it has continued to violate tobacco control policies because nobody is now watching over them like they used to be, not the government, not the CSO’s because of the limited movement and the focus on COVID-19.” (Kenya_01)

■ **a. Tobacco industry promoting incorrect information**

The tobacco industry used the COVID-19 period to spread incorrect information in order to promote its agenda hence the need for advocates to counter these tactics.

“it’s always the interference of the industry because at the time when we heard people saying that there was a link [between smoking and COVID-19], the industry wanted to take advantage of this to make people believe that the link was in a positive way. We heard also that nicotine could also cure, or we could also

find a nicotine vaccine to be able to treat COVID.” (Cote D’Ivoire_01)

■ **b. Inability of some advocacy organizations to function optimally**

For the advocates, challenges the pandemic posed to them include inability of advocacy organizations to function optimally due to various reasons including challenges of incurring extra administrative costs and maintaining jobs of staff at some organizations.

“Before we used to meet and exchange ideas, now we have to be on Zoom, extra costs include internet and something like that. So, there has been failure in terms of getting resources and also some organizations have challenges in maintaining human resource.” (Uganda_01)

■ **c. Reduced contact with community members**

Restrictions on movement also meant that the tobacco control community could not physically reach out to the public as they usually did to sensitize their people. A participant from Benin stated that,

“We’ve not been able to just go to the population and talk to them. We always use the communication channels I talked to you about earlier. It’s been very hard for civil society organizations to get out to the population by telling them about the dangers attached to tobacco product consumption during the pandemic period.” (Benin_01)

■ **d. Concerns about increased exposure of the population to secondhand smoke**

The restrictions on movement also brought about concerns of increased exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke at home. According to one participant,

“...there was concern about the lockdown and when it eventually came, and the fact that people were now smoking in-house because people were not moving about, so people were smoking in their homes, I mean they were mostly in their home and we found that it could increase the burden of smoking related diseases.” (Ghana_01).

■ **e. Slower pace of policy implementation**

In some countries, the pandemic resulted in a slower pace of policy implementation.

“Yes, the Covid-19 has actually hit us surprisingly, because this is something that was not expected. But it has actually, one thing that it has actually affected was the pace of implementation.” (Gambia_02)

■ **f. Impact on advocacy plans and financial challenges for advocacy organizations**

Another challenge was the inability for tobacco control advocates to continue carrying out all their activities especially due to partners needing to postpone or suspend their operations.

“it has impacted a lot, mostly in activities, even the report we have submitted. There were many partners who suspended and

postponed certain activities and it was done at many levels, that really hindered us to work as we planned” (Senegal_01).

In addition to creating a need to amend their advocacy plans, the COVID-19 crises brought upon financial challenges on some advocacy organizations which resulted in the inability of tobacco control advocates to counter the tobacco industry’s effort to manipulate public opinion during this time.

“As you know, civil society in the recent past... funding has been erratic, so we have got to get funds. You know government doesn’t fund civil society, so you have to look for money yourself.” (Zambia_02).

“to fight that statement [tobacco use being protective of COVID-19], we have tried but we lacked funding; and to fight against tobacco, we need the means” (Senegal_03).

4. TOBACCO INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES/ EFFORTS TO PROMOTE ITS AGENDA DURING COVID-19

The activities and efforts by the tobacco industry to promote their agenda during COVID-19 are grouped under two main subthemes guided by the Policy dystopia model by Uluncalar et al.²⁸

- a) Activities (instrumental strategies)
- b) Arguments (discursive strategies)

Activities and Arguments were further categorized using the WHO six strategies of industry interference²⁹ as described under the section on conceptual framework.

This model of categorizing tobacco industry interference has been previously used by Egbe et al to describe industry interference in Nigeria.³⁰

■ a. Activities (instrumental strategies)

As the name implies, these are activities the tobacco industry engaged in either directly or indirectly in a bid to promote its business and interest during the pandemic. These activities are described under the six strategies of industry interference as identified by the WHO.

1. Maneuvering to hijacking the political and legislative or policy process

The industry was found attending meetings with the government (for example in Benin) aimed at influencing policy.

“So, we have seen representatives of the tobacco industry in some meetings, and we know that the industry approaches the public authority and about this we cannot do anything....And even during the processes of taking the law, the industry approached the presidency and tried to infiltrate the policy about the elaboration and adoption of a law which goes in harmony with the WHO framework. (Benin_02).

The relations the industry had with government afforded some privileges for their products, like tax increment exemption in Kenya.

“because of the position that government gave BAT, after giving those donations, then there were no significant changes that happened during the national budget

cycle, that financial year... So, because of COVID-19 the government decided to not raise the inflation on consumer goods including tobacco products" (Kenya_03).

The industry during this period was able to influence government sectors like agriculture. A Zambian participant reported that the

"...ministry of agriculture announced that in 2021/2022 season, they will increase the production of tobacco more than 100%. But we know it is not their fault, the tobacco industry has really penetrated the ministry of agriculture and they listen to anything that the tobacco industry is telling them" (Zambia_01).

In countries like South Africa and Uganda, the industry used this time to work towards the halting of policy formulation or implementation.

"the e-cigarettes industry, it was VPASA - the Vapor Products Association of South Africa, they wrote an open letter to the minister of health complaining about the tobacco control bill and products that are affected by it...that they don't feel the comments that were submitted in 2018 have been listened to at all and they are basically calling for the bill to be halted... According to them the [lockdown sales] ban is not democratic," (SA_01).

In Uganda, the COVID-19 pandemic began at a time when British American Tobacco Uganda (BAT-Uganda) had taken the tobacco control community to court due to regulations. The industry used this time to delay the proceedings of the court.

"BAT took advantage of COVID, to further delay the case against the regulations

that were enforced, because a lot of attention was put on COVID and the court hearings were not happening because of COVID... So, first BAT took advantage of not concluding that case, because we couldn't meet, they were asking for more time from the court to ensure that their issues are resolved," (Uganda_02).

2. Exaggerating the economic importance of the industry

This was mostly done as arguments against government policies in the media (see discursive strategies).

3. Manipulating public opinion to gain the appearance of respectability

Tobacco industry was found manipulating public opinion to gain appearance of respectability. There were five activities that the industry was reported undertaking under this theme.

Manipulating public opinion through advertising and marketing:

Marketing of new products like Lyft nicotine pouches in Kenya was seen during this period and they were marketed as alternative tobacco/nicotine products as a way to convince people that they had a solution for smokers wanting to quit as a result of the link between smoking and COVID-19 disease severity.

"Especially BAT, they were aggressively marketing their nicotine pouch, which they would sell under the branch name called Lyft, so I think the pandemic gave them more space, more motivation to market

it because part of the slogan which they market it is that it is an alternative that is safer, less harmful to cigarettes. ... it gained a lot of traction and attention during the COVID period because they have been marketing this product as less harmful product that smokers can actually consider even in terms of helping them to quit smoking, which is not true” (Kenya_03).

The industry marketed their products on social media platforms, in order to engage with the youth. A participant mentioned that:

“British American Tobacco were the most visible of these companies, on Twitter, they were on Facebook, they’ve been very actively engaging the youth in different initiatives that came up, especially in the agricultural sector” (Nigeria_02).

The industry used the opportunity of the COVID-19 pandemic to advertise their products in clubs by organizing promotional activities and giving out gifts items.

“And you know, one of our reporters told me, you know, they do these promotions in clubs and bars in the night, that you will go to an area where there is a young girl at the entrance giving you cigarettes as you go in and then there is the buy one get two, and then there is buy two and get a present and then he told me that there is a special nicely packed snuff that would come, as you order something, so if you order chicken, they bring everything, and that nicely packed snuff with the food.” (Tanzania_01).

Manipulating public opinion through COVID-19 donations:

The industry also used donations disguised as corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to manipulate the public. The industry donated things like COVID-19 essentials.

“They donated sanitizer, oxygen machines, and all those kind of stuff, that was all that they could do before we began the advocacy and stopped other states.” (Nigeria_01).

These donations were acts to make the industry appear socially responsible and allow the government to see them as progressive partners of the society.

“So, engaging with government in the guise of so-called corporate social responsibility at the height of Covid was to make them seem socially responsible. And then, because of that gesture, we also had another state government seek donations from British American Tobacco, also to address Covid-19 challenges.” (Nigeria_02).

“So, when COVID just started last year, I mentioned that when the government put that inter-ministerial COVID response committee, BAT donated 10.6 million Kenyan shillings.” (Kenya_03).

Tobacco companies were aware that with lockdown restrictions people were most likely to struggle financially so they donated to charities and hospitals as part of efforts to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"...they started to give out charity or support for the institutions, like hospital... they bought some rice, some sugar and other condiments to the hospital. So, they wanted to channel that through the Minister of Health, but we alerted the ministry" (Kenya_01).

Donations made by the tobacco industry were ways for the industry to rebuild their image. A participant from Senegal reported that;

"...the tobacco industry has taken the advantage of the COVID-19 to rebuild its image by making donations to the government of Senegal. I will give you an example of one of its bosses who contributed in the funds for COVID-19 that the government was looking for, the 1000 billion [West African CFA franc] that the government was looking for, the tobacco industry contributed around 1 billion [West African CFA franc] in the funds of COVID." (Senegal_01).

Manipulating public opinion through sponsorships:

The industry was seen sponsoring competitions during this period. "BAT announced a battle of minds competitions, where they sponsor young stars" (SA_01).

"Philip Morris has been promoting what is called the Conrad Nigeria Challenge which primarily targets pupils in the schools where you have very rich children and they are primed to come up with visuals that gets funded by the Conrad Foundation, through the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World." (Nigeria_02).

Manipulating public opinion through advocating for issues which are anti-tobacco:

The industry also pretended to be against illicit trade before and during South Africa's COVID-19 lockdown tobacco ban, when in fact they are part of the problem, all to manipulate the public.

"But what is obviously frustrating is how the industry either participate or become complacent in illicit trade dealings as the same time they will come and cry illicit trade." (SA_01)

Manipulation of public opinion through media stunts on the development of a vaccine against COVID-19 and the ability of tobacco to protect against COVID-19

The tobacco industry used the media to promote their image under the guise that they were creating a vaccine against COVID-19.

"They used that massively in the Nigeria media, to say that tobacco company is about to develop a vaccine, and that created the wrong impression, that maybe there is something in tobacco leaves that could cure COVID-19" (Nigeria_01).

The tobacco industry also used this time to state that tobacco can protect people from COVID by saying "smokers were less exposed to the COVID-19 disease" (Senegal_03).

4. Fabricating support through front groups

The industry knows that they are not supposed to contribute towards public funds therefore, they use front groups to donate on their behalf in some countries. A participant from Senegal mentioned

that in Senegal and Mauritania, the tobacco industry contributed to the government COVID-19 funds through a well-known businessman who is affiliated with Philip Morris International.

"...they contributed but indirectly. So how have they done it? They used different ways, it means the government has called for the COVID-19 trust funds to sustain organizations and also the population. Some people contributed and among those people were businessmen. Since the law is forbidding any collaboration with the tobacco industry, the tobacco industry did not come directly but they went through businessmen doing it indirectly. It was after then we discovered that the Mauritanian man, the Mauritanian businessman who represent Philip Morris in Mauritania has offered 1 billion to Senegal and 2 billion in Mauritania in the covid-19 force funds, so that's it." (Senegal 01).

In Zambia, the industry was said to be very careful with their donations making it difficult for people to know that the tobacco industry is behind the contribution.

"Now this time they are very conscious. They don't expose their contributions, they do it secretly, privately. And it's not them coming out openly, they use front groups and their allies. Thinking that it's those people contributing but underground it's the tobacco industry. They are mostly now using their front groups and their allies... the allies are not even exposing those contributions to see that there is an impact" (Zambia 01).

The tobacco industry in South Africa included other parties to their court case against the government giving the impression that these groups were the ones fighting the government which they claim was infringing on their freedom of choice.

"The industry has become more of a people's person instead. So, if you look for instance at the BAT challenge in the high court, some of the co-applicants were people who smoke, they were the industry, the people who smoke, and they were retailers and the farmers, I think. There were a lot of co-applicants in that court case" (South Africa 01).

5. Manipulating science

While scientists and tobacco control researchers were in the process of gathering more scientific evidence about the association of tobacco use and COVID-19, the industry used this opportunity to share inaccurate information about tobacco smoking being protective against COVID-19. A participant from Nigeria reports:

"When COVID-19 came, the first problem was the lack of adequate information about COVID-19. And so, the social media brainwashed people about how you can use smoking not to contract COVID-19, about how, smoking because of the heat, could reduce your chances of getting the virus, of getting COVID-19." (Nigeria 01).

In Uganda, the media published articles on how tobacco can cure COVID-19 and it was reported that the industry made efforts to ensure such publications were promoted so that the public could

believe these things and not the correct science.

“The Ugandan media was awash, with the information of tobacco being key in curing COVID-19. So, I think the media got this information from the tobacco industry, but mainly from some French company trying to cure COVID-19 with tobacco. So, this was the news, I think it was spread, the industry was making sure that people believe it”. (Uganda 02).

6. Intimidating government with litigation

The tobacco industry took the South African government to court during the COVID-19 lockdown tobacco sales ban in 2020. The Fair-Trade Independent Association (FITA) was the first to take the government to court after series of threats and later British American Tobacco South Africa (BATSA) did the same. The court case by FITA went in favour of the government and was appealed. The appeal was also won by the government. However, for the BATSA case, the judgement was only delivered after the government had lifted the sales ban and it went in favour of BATSA.

■ b. Arguments (discursive strategies)

Discursive strategies are those arguments which the tobacco industry uses to try to convince the public and governments, and are usually propagated in the media by affiliates and allies to push the industry's agenda in the public space. These arguments are described under the six strategies of industry interference as identified by the WHO.

1. Maneuvering to hijacking the political and legislative process

This was done mostly as activities as described under instrumental strategies.

2. Exaggerating the economic importance of the industry

While the tobacco control community tried to use this time to urge the government to pass the proposed Bill in South Africa, the industry used arguments of how the bill will affect the economy to gain support.

“From the stakeholder's part, like right now we have been talking about COVID-19 and how it has affected the economy, and now we are talking about high rate of unemployment so again the tobacco industry has used that to make arguments of how the tobacco control bill will affect jobs, trade, you know, the usual arguments, so its fertile environment for them to do that.” (SA 01).

Also, the tobacco industry used arguments of job losses when trying to get the ban lifted during the tobacco ban in South Africa.

“So, using the tobacco control ban in the pandemic the industry has managed to elevate the narrative around illicit trade, the economics side arguments that they pose that they contribute so much money to the country that they contribute a lot of jobs.” (SA_01).

3. Manipulating public opinion to gain public respectability

The tobacco industry continued to use arguments to manipulate public opinion to gain respectability

during the pandemic. In South Africa, the ban on the sale of tobacco products created an opportunity for the tobacco industry to promote an anti-tobacco control stance in some members of the public.

“So, I think that argument was around the ban, but it has implications for tobacco control and public health population as whole. Because we see that the rights to use the products or rights to smoke will elevate it above the right to health. So, I would say that is what has been happening you know, in the tobacco ban. And somehow through that ban and through that judgement and the tobacco interference, in my opinion, the public and the smokers as well have grown to be anti-tobacco control, so they are more aggressive.” (SA 01).

4. Fabricating support through front groups

Front groups mobilized by the tobacco industry in South Africa to challenge the tobacco ban both in the media and in the courts made arguments that were in favour of industry position, but these were seen by the courts as coming from the individuals and not the industry.

Some of the arguments were basically saying the ban affects their freedom of choice, it affects the right to dignity. So the way the argument was based, it was as if the industry was the one representing their rights, it was the industry that was caring about their integrity. And even the court [that the government lost], it actually accepted some of those arguments because if you hear the ruling or in some of the statements during the ruling, the court was saying the ban violates the

right to dignity, to someone’s freedom of choice, so I think it did affect the narrative, but, we’ll keep fighting hey.” (SA_01).

5. Discrediting proven science

The tobacco industry in Benin was accused of spreading fake news about tobacco being healthy to use during the pandemic in contradiction to the link found between tobacco use and COVID-19 disease severity.

“The tobacco industry are strictly bringing their own fake news that has spread all over the country and people believe in the first place before we just go and tell them about the danger of that act as we are in the pandemic season.” (Benin_01).

6. Intimidating government with litigation

During the initial lockdown in South Africa, there was a ban on the sale of tobacco products. The industry started by threatening to take the government to court and eventually did so. The industry used arguments in court such as the sales ban being unconstitutional, causing job losses, and increasing illicit trade.

“Challenges that were raised by the tobacco industry at the high court in Cape Town was that the tobacco ban was unconstitutional that was a loss for public health from my legal perspective.” (SA_01).

In Uganda, the tobacco industry threatened to take the government and tobacco control advocates to court when the government was enforcing the regulations for the Tobacco Control Act.

"Then of course there was a call for litigation because the government was now enforcing the regulation, and they were threatening to take us to court again but they dropped it." (Uganda_02).

■ c. No activities recorded or no evidence of any activities

In some countries, participants mentioned that there were no tobacco industry activities during this time to the best of their knowledge while others said they could not confirm if indeed the industry was active in their countries. A participant from Senegal attributed the lack of visible activities of the industry to their strict and comprehensive law preventing the tobacco industry from advertising.

"For now there hasn't been any record of such contribution. I mean all our studies and texts haven't showed any of those, but we wouldn't be surprised if something of this nature indeed happened. But for now, we haven't come across any data to prove that there was any support from the tobacco industry." (Ghana_01).

"...although they, in special the tobacco mill, the Mozambique Leaf Tobacco, said that the pandemic has affected their business. But we know that they are still conducting their business. Because the government, the Mozambiquan government, they did not adopt any measures, prohibiting people or prohibiting smoking due to the pandemic." (Mozambique_01).

"But in terms of contributions such as if the tobacco industry gave funds to the government or the tobacco industry conducted open campaigns to say that

we will support in this aspect or we will do that, we have not heard echoes, we do not have evidence at this level so we can assume that there has been no open action by the tobacco industry in that way." (Ivory Coast – 01).

A participant from Senegal believes that the inability of the tobacco industry to exploit the COVID-19 situation in their country is due to strong tobacco laws already in place.

"Well, I did not really feel the presence of the tobacco industry as part of the response against COVID-19, frankly I have not felt it at all. I have seen it nowhere, also because in Senegal we have taken a law against tobacco, it is extremely important this law, which prevents the tobacco industry from advertising on smoking, and could be that the industry were more or less confined, could not maybe go out to show the public here we are, we are also participating." (Senegal 02).

5. IMPACT OF TOBACCO INDUSTRY EFFORTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The efforts of the tobacco industry, through their activities and arguments impacted on tobacco control in the region. These activities enabled the tobacco industry to create friendships, launder their image, and win public support.

■ a. Impact on government

One country where tobacco industry activities created a cordial relationship with government is Kenya. This relationship led the government to be more lenient with the industry as indicated by a participant from Kenya.

"The impact has been that as of now, they are looking for lower taxes, they are trying to influence the legislature, and given the support by the government, the government seems to be more lenient to them." (Kenya_02).

"So, the tobacco industry has continued to expand its market during this Corona time. It has continued to make a lot of profits. It has continued to market their products online, because now most people are online." (Kenya 01).

■ b. Impact on the public

The tobacco industry was able to launder its image in the public domain by creating the impression that it is a key stakeholder in the fight against COVID-19.

"In a sense, the tobacco companies end up getting positive image, they are seen as stakeholders not only in the fight against Covid but also in our agricultural sector." (Nigeria_02).

■ c. Impact on the work of tobacco control advocates

Another impact of the tobacco industry is their effort to undo the work of tobacco control advocates by their attempt to normalize their business.

"So, I think I can talk about it in two ways; one is, of course they are trying to normalize their business, that it is not as bad as it is being put. So, they are undoing the work that the tobacco control advocates have done" (Uganda_02).

■ a. Tobacco products listed as essential and sold cheaper

In Kenya, tobacco products were part of the essential products and so given a "tax holiday" or a tax pass during the pandemic. When such products are not taxed they become even cheaper to buy.

"The government allowed tobacco and tobacco products to be listed as part of the essential products which will be given preference during the COVID. So, these products in terms of the curfew hours will be seen as essential products. Tobacco is listed as part of essential products. So that meant that they are given an opportunity, you know, the sad thing is that when we are given like a tax holiday, when people who are suffering in terms of not being able to pay rent, not being able to buy their commodities then tobacco and tobacco products were not seen as products which are killing people, so they are included in that so they benefitted by getting tax holiday at least by people who are smoking tobacco not have them pay VAT or the full tax as they needed to pay. So, tobacco and tobacco products became even cheaper." (Kenya 02).

6. THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS DURING THE PANDEMIC

The tobacco industry's business was described as quite profitable during this time. The industry used the pandemic to market its products online, thus expanding its market.

■ **b. Tobacco listed as non-essential items (South Africa)**

In South Africa, tobacco products were part of the non-essential products. The industry was not given special treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"They lifted the ban when they decided it was appropriate for them to do so. They were not giving in to the industry's pressure, they didn't do that. I think in this regard the government did show resilience and showed strength and much of political will to try and just focus on health and not on the tobacco industry complaints. They didn't give them special treatment or priority, they just said this is not essential, and that's it. It's not about who you are, they complained, I remember there was, in the FITA case, the court said even if you look at the hairdressers, they are still also banned at some point, so there is nothing special about you specifically as the tobacco industry. It's still the same, you are not an essential. So I think that was a statement from the public health and government basically." (SA_01).

■ **c. The tobacco business may have lost some grounds**

On the other hand, in Ghana, the tobacco industry was seen as not succeeding during this time. The tobacco industry did not do as well because of decrease in smoking rates due to the stigma attached to tobacco products during the pandemic which led to people being scared to smoke in public.

"But I must say that generally, because of the effort that has been put, consumption

of tobacco is reduced and there is so much, if I might put it, so much stigma attached to the consumption of tobacco. So, when people even take it people sort of are not bold enough to display it or to even smoke it in the public. So, I must say that, the operations of the tobacco industry in Ghana has been the same model that they have been using and they haven't been able to exert their control during the Covid. I must say that, they weren't able to have their way much in the Covid era." (Ghana 02).

■ **d. No change in the tobacco business**

In countries like Benin and Gambia, participants reported that the tobacco industry's business was did not change during the pandemic.

"It has not really been..., I don't know how to put it. No one can say that it's been outstanding, but it's continued like before." (Benin 01).

"For tobacco industry, they have actually continued to sell their products, because, our laws do not restrict the sales of the products. It only restricts the manner in which they are selling their products." (Gambia 02).

7. GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS COUNTERING / RESPONDING TO TOBACCO INDUSTRY INTERFERENCE INITIATIVES

Due to the efforts of the tobacco industry, government and civil society organisations in some countries embarked on efforts to counter and respond to the activities and arguments of the tobacco industry.

■ a. Government efforts

Countering measures included resisting the pressures from the tobacco industry and their allies, public enlightenment campaigns on the importance of smoking cessation, webinars for stakeholders of tobacco control and paying more attention to cessation interventions.

In Cote D'Ivoire, the government encouraged people to quit smoking through public awareness campaigns.

"The government's declaration and the message that was circulating that they encouraged people not to smoke. So, if we just stick to that in terms of a campaign message, this is a way for the government to disavow the tobacco industry." (Cote D'Ivoire-01).

In Kenya, the government engaged more with tobacco control during this period to come up with solutions for tobacco control.

"And then it is also during this time that the government has tried to bring all the stakeholders together. We have had a number of webinars organized by the tobacco control division of the

department of health where we have put our heads together and talked about these issues and then the government is also in the process of having cessation centers in every county in the country, so that those who are addicted can be assisted to cease" (Kenya_01).

In South Africa, the government responded by being resilient and not allowing the industry to push them over and prioritizing health over economic interests.

"I think they responded by not giving into the industry. They demonstrated a lot of will on their part, because the industry did try. When the ban was instituted for the first time they did try, but they pushed back.... I think the government has also shown resilience and they have prioritized health over economic interests, they tried to push back for a long time." (SA_01).

In Senegal, the government issued an order to prevent the tobacco industry from removing the tax on the price of tobacco and currently, there is a decree being developed to track and trace tobacco products in the country.

"But there was an order as part of the taxation, an order was recently issued towards the end of 2020 that prevented the tobacco industry from removing the tax on the price of tobacco. This was done via our tax institution and the Ministry of Finance...and another element is a decree that is being developed that would help with the traceability of tobacco products and that too is an important element that enters into the efforts of the government to fight against tobacco." (Senegal_03).

■ b. CSO efforts

Civil society organizations (CSOs) responded or countered the industry efforts by continuing to monitor and report the tobacco industry, and also warning the government of industry tactics.

“What happened in the beginning they started to give out charity or support for the institutions, like hospital, because of COVID-19 impact on the hospital... because we fully remember, but we intervened quickly to inform them, to inform the Minister of Health, that that should not be accepted.” (Gambia_01).

CSOs were also being pro-active, through raising awareness and constantly engaging the public.

“When the Covid-19 emerged, once the links were established, we began our advocacy, our awareness creation to the public, you know engaging the media, our media colleagues and then also granting interviews, issue out releases to let the whole world and government know that tobacco is a killer and it’s going to increase our burden if we continue to allow smoking everywhere and there’s a need for us to protect people who are not smokers” (Ghana_01).

CSO’s countered the industry through engaging with the press and social media campaigns

“We’ve had collaborations and joint communications campaigns executed by the CSO’s in the country, including the media. So, we have some media who are tobacco control advocates that we work closely with. Some of the strategies we have used include having joint activities,

we’ve had a press conference in times when we were able to meet some time last year, we’ve had joint meetings that we sit in responding to the listing of tobacco products as essential products, we’ve had newspaper articles that we write and are published in the various newspaper outlets, we’ve had periodic social media campaigns using twitter and Facebook.” (Kenya_03).

8. EFFORTS OF PARTIES IN THE AFRO REGION TO IMPLEMENT THE FCTC AND/OR THE ITP

During this period some governments were able to adopt some FCTC-complaint laws. In Kenya, the government finally ratified the Protocol to Elimination Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

“Some of the measures that government has taken to implement the FCTC during the pandemic, I think first of all the biggest one I can think of is finally the government was able to finalize ratification of the ITP [Illicit Trade Protocol], that is one aspect of the FCTC that Kenya has been working on.” (Kenya_03).

Advocacy to intervene in the movie industry in Nigeria (Nollywood) also paid off. The high rates of smoking in Nigerian home videos received some attention from government and other stakeholders.

“Stakeholders in the movie industry, stakeholders in government, the Federal Ministry of Health and other stakeholders came together to look at how to finally do something about the prevalence of smoking in movies. It’s culmination of some of those activities are particularly

monitoring surveillance activities we did in 2020. And the result is that we now have government agencies who are ready to do something.” (Nigeria_02).

In Mozambique, the government set up a multi-sectoral group to deal with tobacco during COVID-19, encourage people to quit and assist those who have contracted tobacco-related diseases.

“There is a multi-sectorial group work, and this multi-sectorial group is headed by the government, by the Ministry of Health and we are working on the different issues on economics of tobacco and how the health professional, they assist those people smoking to quit, and those who have contracted the diseases related to tobacco use.” (Mozambique_01).

In some other countries, no efforts were noticed to implement the FCTC due to the government focusing on the pandemic and not having the ability to focus on tobacco.

“I don’t see any effort being made in that direction. You know the covid has mobilized the whole government because even all the other diseases are forgotten, and we only talk about Covid.” (Senegal_03).

9. LESSONS LEARNT DURING THE PANDEMIC

Below are a few lessons for tobacco control during the pandemic.

■ a. Innovative tactic of the tobacco industry

The tobacco industry has been innovative with their tactics during the pandemic and will always use them for their benefit to the detriment of public health. Tobacco control advocates must be a step ahead of the industry in order to effectively prevent them from manipulating the public.

“The lesson we can learn for tobacco control during Covid-19 pandemic is tobacco industry will always try to take advantage of every situation. They are always present, they are always looking for opportunities, they are very sharp and will use all kinds of situations to maximize their own profits at the cost of the populations.” (Benin_01).

■ b. Collaboration of tobacco control stakeholders is important

It is important for tobacco control advocates to collaborate with different stakeholders or departments.

“The good thing we learned during the Covid-19 pandemic is cooperation and collaborations. Because during the pandemic, I felt that it has affected not only The Gambia, but the whole world. But because we have a multi-secretarial working group, so, all the departments are represented; Government departments, institutions, NGOs, security officers, so named them.” (Gambia_01).

The importance of tobacco control advocates working in unity was more pronounced during this period.

"We have also learned to be together, to come together and do even more monitoring so that when we are together like that, then we still maintain our voice and we still remain focused" (Kenya_01).

■ c. The importance of strong legislation

An important lesson learnt during this time was that better laws are needed to combat the use of tobacco.

"We need a good law, because these excuses that are given, that tobacco brings in revenue will not hold water, so we need to continue pushing for the good laws, because when you have a

good law, majority of these issues can be addressed very easily, including the industry interference." (Tanzania_01).

■ d. An opportunity to advance tobacco control policy

The pandemic was seen as an opportunity to advance tobacco control policies as the tobacco industry is unrelenting.

"I think the lesson to learn in an opportunity like this, while the tobacco industry is trying to exploit it, we should also be able to see if we can use this to advance public policy" (Nigeria_01).

CANVASS

Spread information on the danger of tobacco during the COVID-19 crisis



Advocates must rally others now

#StopTobaccoStopCorona

DISCUSSION

Tobacco companies have their footprints and operations strongly registered in the African continent. This study explored the state of affairs of tobacco control during the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa. It also explored how the tobacco industry has exploited the COVID-19 pandemic to interfere with tobacco control in the region and how governments and CSOs countered industry interference during this period. Findings suggest that though the pandemic has been a difficult time for the world and Africa, it has brought both challenges and opportunities for the tobacco control community. Furthermore,

the tobacco industry found ways throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to aggressively market novel and conventional tobacco products to generate billions in profits while using relatively inexpensive donations to promote itself to governments as a partner fighting the COVID-19 pandemic

Despite the innovative tactics used by the industry during this period, the pandemic has offered the tobacco control community opportunities to raise awareness about the health effects of tobacco use (leveraging on the link between tobacco use and COVID-19 disease severity), the importance and health impact of smoking cessation, and the tactics of the tobacco industry. The pandemic has also brought more attention to tobacco control and motivated more collaborations between tobacco control stakeholders.

The categorization of tobacco and nicotine products as non-essential items and subsequent ban on the

sale of tobacco products in South Africa attracted a lot of attention in the international community.⁸ India and Botswana also imposed temporary bans on the sale of tobacco products.³¹ About 15 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region banned the use of shisha or waterpipe tobacco to decrease the spread of COVID -19 during this period.³² These were actions taken to lighten the burden of COVID-19 that could be increased by tobacco use during the pandemic.³³

The global economy has been immensely threatened by the pandemic and African economies are no different. The outbreak of COVID-19 has affected the African economy negatively by increasing the unemployment rate due to businesses closing shops, and restricted movements as part of lockdown measures aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19.³⁴ In addition to this, the pandemic disrupted people's livelihoods, education and it impacted the healthcare system due to shortage of healthcare facilities, professionals and equipment.³⁵⁻³⁷

The tobacco industry was found to continue pushing its agenda during this period.

Tobacco industry interference took a more daring and intense turn as the industry attempted to create a cordial relationship with government, engaged in more litigation and threats of litigation, and intensified initiatives to clean its public image through donations.

Our results show that in Africa, the industry donated towards government COVID-19 funds, carried out corporate social responsibility, used this opportunity to market their products (including novel products) through all sorts of activities including sponsorships and competitions, to maintain and grow their customer base, especially targeting the youth. Such gestures mask the enormous burden tobacco use places on people's health as well as health systems worldwide and provides a platform to curry favor for policy changes. These industry CSR activities are a strategy to gain legitimacy, increase public trust and advance business interest.

During this time also, there was a huge presence of the tobacco industry on various social media platforms.

A 2020 study conducted in the USA revealed that social media platforms like Twitter were used by the industry to mobilize support and recognition for its claim to produce a COVID vaccine, and to make the public believe tobacco is safe to use during COVID.³⁸ For example, BAT used references to COVID-19 to promote its image, including claims of investing in research and development for a COVID-19 vaccine.

Results from this study also reveal that the industry manipulated the public by showing public concern about illicit trade while evidence suggested that they too were engaging in illicit trade.^{39,40} It is important to note that the tobacco industry does not have the solution to illicit trade since they are part of the problem, however, by harmonizing regional tax regimes, through raising taxes and implementation of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, illicit trade can be curbed effectively.⁴¹

We found that in some countries, the industry introduced new tobacco products during this period

and labelled these products as less harmful. This is in line with their activity as reported in a UK study, which revealed that the tobacco industry also introduced new products during this time in order to continue selling their products.⁴² Due to lack of resources, funding and the industry managing to hide some evidence of their interference, there were cases where industry interference in some countries could not be proven.

As governments have looked to introduce different regulations on tobacco products to reduce smoking prevalence, so has the tobacco industry also intensified lobbying to enable government acceptance. If regulations are proposed, then the industry will argue that they are not necessary, they will cost jobs, they will be counter-productive or they are illegal. Thus, the impact of the efforts of the industry in Africa led to delay in policy implementation in some cases. The industry being able to influence the government into doing them 'favors' and being able to build a good and trusted image also led to some delays in policy implementation.

These efforts by the industry have involved corporate social responsibility such as collaborating on COVID-19 vaccine; promoting sales of emerging products using unfounded health claims; exploiting COVID-19 for online social media promotion; and undermining COVID-19-related restrictions.

The activities of the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic point to the urgency and the importance of continued industry monitoring and implementation of WHO FCTC Article 5.3 guidelines.⁴³

While government and civil society organizations continue to counter the industry in Africa through raising awareness, continuing to monitor their activities and exposing their tactics, it is believed that the pandemic has provided a good opportunity

to discourage smoking and encourage quitting.³³ The tobacco control community has also used this period to raise awareness about the need for stricter implementation of the WHO FCTC in Africa.

BEWARE!

Partnership today, may undermine regulation tomorrow



Prevent Big Tobacco from influencing tobacco control policies in future.

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CONCLUSION

Big tobacco stepped up its meddling in 2019 and accelerated these efforts in 2020, even as a respiratory health crisis swept the globe. As governments around the world are focused on fighting COVID-19, tobacco companies were violating government regulations against tobacco through ploys and tactics to discourage policy makers from implementing the fight against the deadly mayhem.

This report shows that governments in Africa have a lot of work to do.

Even though policies against cigarette use are enacted by government, the cigarette companies' interference against those policies makes the situation detrimental. Governments are vulnerable to the industry especially if they do not have strong protections against interference already in place.

To stem the tide of interference by tobacco companies, African governments have enormous tasks to perform. The tobacco industry has an irreconcilable conflict of interest with public health and has a well-documented history of deception and of capitalizing on humanitarian crises, natural disasters, and other similar catastrophic events. Policy makers and tobacco control advocates need to protect tobacco control efforts from the commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study

1 - The tobacco control community should be more proactive than reactive towards continued monitoring of the tobacco industry

2 - Tobacco use cessation interventions need more attention in Africa both from government and CSOs. Smoking cessation support programmes need to be heightened in the face of the pandemic. For example, opportunity for smoking cessation support should be integrated into all health care settings and using diverse health professionals and targeted media channels. Given the important role played by the media and formal education in discouraging smoking behavior, these media could be used more intensively in disseminating relevant information on the dangers of smoking.

3 - Funding organizations should leverage on the opportunity provided by the pandemic to invest in the design and implementation of tobacco use cessation interventions

4 - The formulation and effective implementation of WHO FCTC-complaint laws are urgently needed in SSA

5 - Measures to protect public officials from industry influence should be adopted. Officials need to be free to develop and implement tobacco control measures without industry interference. CSOs must push for an inclusion of and the implementation of Article 5.3 in national tobacco laws. This would guide government and industry interactions and prevent future tobacco industry interference. Furthermore, adopting a code of conduct or guidance will shield governments from industry interference. To be effective, this should apply to all public and elected officials irrespective of their departments and positions.

6 - Building of collaborative networks between CSOs and government is essential to foster effective tobacco control in SSA

7 - The tobacco industry should be prevented from participating in policy. Governments should protect tobacco control policies using a whole government approach. Non-health agencies should also counteract tobacco industry interference and stop the industry from undermining and delaying tobacco control measures

8 - The industry's so-called corporate social responsibility activities should be de-normalized. Governments should de-normalize these CSR activities because they are a form of sponsorship, and the industry uses them to whitewash the harm they cause to the society and to influence policy makers

9 - The tobacco industry should not be given incentives, exemptions, or tax breaks to run its harmful business. Duty free status at duty-free shops should also be removed.

10 - Greater transparency when dealing with the tobacco industry will reduce incidences of interference. All interactions with the tobacco industry must be recorded and made publicly available.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, generalizability of the results is limited. Results may not be generalizable to the continent of Africa due to the non-randomized selection of participating countries and participants.

Some key informant interviews were conducted in French. The French interviews were translated to English to be analyzed. There may have been some loss of meaning during translation to English due to the difference in languages. The interviews were virtual, connection in some countries were not stable making it difficult to conduct the interviews in some cases. However, wherever the interview was inaudible, it was then noted down and not used in order to prevent misunderstanding. One participant who is from a Portuguese-speaking country could not be interviewed in his preferred language, Portuguese. He agreed to be interviewed in English but it is possible that his participation could have been limited by the use of English being his second language.

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➔ **APPENDIX 1.** Participants contacted, interviewed, and source

Total Number of Participants contacted	Participants per Country contacted (N=51)	Participants interviewed per Country (N=23)
Zambia	2	2
Ghana	2	2
Nigeria	5	3
Kenya	4	3
Gambia	3	2
South Africa	6	1
Benin	4	2
Uganda	4	2
Tanzania	1	1
Mozambique	1	1
Senegal	3	3
Ivory Coast	4	1
Botswana	3	0
Ethiopia	3	0
Zimbabwe	1	0
Gabon	3	0
Mauritania	2	0
Participants Source		
ATCA	28	
SMU	13	
SAMRC	8	
Referral	2	

➔ APPENDIX 2. Interview schedule

RESEARCH TITLE: COVID-19 AND TOBACCO CONTROL IN AFRICA

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I will be asking you a few questions to which I kindly request your honest opinion.

1 - Please tell me about yourself and your work in tobacco control in your country.

2 - Are you aware of the tobacco companies doing business in your country?

3 - Since the COVID-19 pandemic how has tobacco control been handled in your country?

4 - What is the current state of affairs of tobacco control in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic in your country?

5 - What has been the challenges faced by tobacco control in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic in your country?

6 - What is the general impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in your country?

7 - How has the tobacco industry conducted their business during the COVID-19 pandemic in your country?

8 - Have the tobacco companies contributed

to government's COVID-19 efforts in your country? If yes, how have they done so?

9 - If yes to (8) above, what has been the impact of the tobacco companies' efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic in your country?

10 - What efforts have your government made to effectively implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) during the COVID-19 pandemic

11 - How has your government responded to and/or countered tobacco industry efforts to undermine tobacco control in your country during this pandemic?

12 - How have civil society organizations (and other stakeholders) in your country responded to and/or countered tobacco industry efforts to undermine tobacco control in your country during this pandemic?

13 - What lessons are there to learn for tobacco control in your country during the COVID-19 pandemic?

14 - Is there any other thing you would like me to know about this topic that you may not have mentioned? If yes, please tell me if you wish to do so.

Thank you for your sparing your time to talk with me. I may be in contact with you again should I have more questions..

➔ **APPENDIX 3.** Participant's information sheet and consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH TITLE: COVID-19 AND TOBACCO CONTROL IN AFRICA

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR: DR CATHERINE EGBE

INTRODUCTION

Greetings. My name is _____. I am from the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC). We kindly request your participation in our study titled; COVID-19 and tobacco control in Africa. Before you participate you have to know what this study entails. This form will help you decided whether you would like to participate in this study or not. If you have questions that have not been discussed in detail on this form, please ask me.

ABOUT THE STUDY

This is a qualitative study and for people aged 18 years and above residing in one of the selected Sub-Saharan African countries. Participants must have worked in the tobacco control field for at least 2 years and belong to any of these categories; tobacco control researchers, government officials working in tobacco control or tobacco control advocates. The interview may take between 20 to 30 mins

The qualitative interview will take place via any of the following media of your choice; telephone, Teams, Skype, Zoom, Telegram or WhatsApp. For the second phase, a link will be shared for participants to respond to the online survey. The link will be shared via emails and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram and Instagram.

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

If you agree to participate in this study, we will ask you questions about how activities of the tobacco industry and the government as it concerns tobacco and tobacco control in your country during the time of COVID-19. If you agree to participate in the interview, a conversation will be held with you in private where no one will be able to hear your responses. If you agree to participate in the study, you will do so anonymously. If you are from a French speaking country, we will have a focus group discussion with a group of 5 to 10 participants from other Francophone countries.

We will also audio record the interview we will conduct with you. By signing this consent form, you also consent to allow us to record your interview. Your identity will be kept with utmost confidentiality when reporting our findings.

HARMS OR DISCOMFORT

You may feel uncomfortable when answering the questions because of the sensitive information asked. However, we assure you that all information discussed will remain confidential.

BENEFIT FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

There are no benefits for participating in this study. All the information collected from you will be used to assist the tobacco control team in Africa and also the researchers to understand the tobacco industry interference in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

Participating in this study is strictly voluntary. You are allowed not to answer a question if you do not want to. You have the right to stop participating in the study at any given time without giving a reason.

COMPENSATION

Please take note that you will not be compensated for this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity will remain confidential, during and after the study. All information you share with us will be used for research purposes only. We will keep your private information confidential. Only persons directly working on this study will be able to have access to the information you share with us and that person will have to commit to not sharing it with anybody else. Your name will not be linked to the responses you give when publishing the results from this study. Code names will be used in place of your name. Also, no one will be able to link your responses to you. All information will be kept safe in a passworded laptop computer and after 15 years the information would be destroyed.

FUNDERS OF THE STUDY

This study is being funded by the Africa Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA). ATCA is a non-profit, non-political and continent-wide tobacco control network of civil society organizations (CSOs) with a vision to promote health by building a tobacco-free Africa. ATCA currently has membership in 38 African countries.

PEOPLE TO CONTACT ABOUT THE STUDY

This study has been approved by the SAMRC Human Research Ethics committee and will be conducted accordingly in line with the International Declaration of Helsinki, and the South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, any concerns or complaints, you are urged to call the chairperson of the SAMRC Human Research Ethics committee researcher, Danie du Toit, at (021) 938 0687 or email adri.labuschagne@mrc.ac.za. If you have questions about the study you may call Dr Catherine Egbe on (012) 339 8504 from 8h00 to 16h30, or send an email to catherine.egbe@mrc.ac.za

PARTICIPANT DECLARATION

By signing below, I agree to participate in this study.

Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (as amended)

In accordance with the provisions of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (as amended), I hereby consent:

- a. To my personal information (hereinafter 'data') being collected, processed, shared and stored in accordance with the research protocol as approved by the South African Medical Research Council's Human Research Ethics Committee (SAMRC HREC);
- b. To my anonymised data being shared, processed and transferred by third parties and between third parties, and where relevant beyond the jurisdictional borders of South Africa;
- c. To all findings and results flowing from my anonymised data being broadly shared and published on the conclusion of the research.

I declare that:

- I have read through the details of the consent form and it is written in a language I am comfortable with.
- I had the chance to ask questions and all of my questions were answered to my satisfaction
- I understand that participating in the study is voluntary and there will be no bad outcomes if I choose not to participate in this study
- I am not forced to participate in this study
- I understand that I will get a copy of this form

Signe at (place)..... Date.....

.....
Participant signature

.....
Witness signature

.....
Signature of researcher

RESEARCHER DECLARATION

I (name)..... declare that:

- I explained all the details in this document to (name of participant)
- I encouraged the participant to ask questions and took enough time to answer the questions
- I am content that the participant understands all the characteristics of the study, as discussed above
- I will give the participant a copy of this form

Signe at (place)..... Date.....

.....
Signature of researcher

➔ APPENDIX 4. Review of all industry-related tweets in relation to local and multinational companies in the African region during 2019 to 2021

username	Text	Like	Retweet	Comments
@moneyfmzambia	Japan Tobacco International (JTI) Leaf Zambia in Eastern Province has called for the formulation of policies that will encourage more investments in Zambia's tobacco production. Read more: http://moneyfmzambia.com/2021/06/07/invest-more-in-tobacco-production-jti-urges/			
@pernilleru	Japan Tobacco to integrate the international side and the domestic side of its tobacco business, with global headquarters to be transferred to Swiss non-Japan HQ, intention to unify personnel system/evaluations, ditch seniority based promotion from 2024.	2		
@JPNICEMEA	Japan Tobacco to integrate the international side and the domestic side of its tobacco business, with global headquarters to be transferred to Swiss non-Japan HQ, intention to unify personnel system/evaluations, ditch seniority based promotion from 2024.	1	1	
@fleming77	British American Tobacco, Philip Morris International, Imperial Brands, Japan Tobacco and Altria Group – dominate the global tobacco market today, holding sway over all links of the chain, from cultivation to cigarette production and sales.			
@moneyfmzambia	Japan Tobacco International (JTI) Leaf Zambia says it is expecting tobacco production of 5.2 million kilograms from its contracted growers in Chipata, Eastern Province. Read more: http://moneyfmzambia.com/2021/06/03/jti-projects-5-2-million-kgs-tobacco-production/	1		
@St3phani3_L	Packaging for all tobacco cigarettes in the United Kingdom, including leading brands such as Sterling and Mayfair (both made by a subsidiary of Japan Tobacco International), must adhere to requirements including a designated principal colour (Pantone 448C, a "drab dark...)			1
@du_du_duh	Philip Morris International, Altria, British American Tobacco, Imperial Brands, and Japan Tobacco International are all bigger than ITC	2		1
@CPutChekwe	Chipata branch of Japan Tobacco International Leaf Zambia Limited projects it will buy over 5.2 million kilogrammes of unprocessed tobacco, worth over USD 9 million, this year.	8		1
@iemwaleed	Together, the 'Big 4' – British American Tobacco (BAT) Imperial Brands (IB) Japan Tobacco International (JTI) Philip Morris International (PMI) generate a revenue of more than €80bn & supply most of the world's tobacco. Key to their success? MANIPULATION	41	30	2
@unpadheureuy	to kick-start your career! Join Japan Tobacco International Indonesia's Make It Bright! competition and get a chance to win education savings with a total of 60 Million Rupiah and a life-changing 6-month paid internship in one of our global offices by pitching your bright idea.			1
@girlintheknow03	International investigations reveal the world's biggest tobacco companies - Philip Morris International, British American Tobacco, Imperial, and Japan Tobacco International - are targeting kids at school. Share now to warn parents in your community! #ProtectKidsFromBigTobacco	1	1	

@ThomasPogge	The number of smokers at 1100 million is higher than ever as tobacco firms aggressively target the young in developing countries. The Big Four are British American Tobacco, Imperial Tobacco, Japan Tobacco & Philip Morris International.	10	6	
@theHRDIRECTOR	apan Tobacco International (JTI) wins first ever platinum award for employee wellbeing https://thehrdirector.com/business-news/employee-benefits-and-reward/first-ever-platinum-award-for-employee-wellbeing-goes-to-jti-uk/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter			
@IranChamber	Japan Tobacco International, British American Tobacco control 70% of #Iran's market The cigarette market in Iran is believed to be worth around 400 trillion rials (\$1.74 billion).	2	1	
@SJBELTD	Japan Tobacco International	1		
@SEATCAdotOrg	The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reported that Japan Tobacco International, the third largest multinational #tobacco company, has been bypassing social media site rules to promote and advertise tobacco products to the #youth.			
@schestowitz	«Philip Morris International and Japan Tobacco International having been listed in the 100 Top Patent Filers by the European Patent Office...» LOL, #epo and #cancer givers... so proud!			
@YoYoTom	The five largest tobacco companies are Philip Morris International, Altria, British American Tobacco, Imperial Brands, and Japan Tobacco International. These are fun and fashionable But will probs not extend your life			
@TBIJ	REVEALED: Tobacco giant Japan Tobacco International has been running disguised adverts for its brands on Facebook and Instagram	12	13	1
@AteneoMISA	Our year long partner, Workbean, is having their Career Fiesta, a virtual one-stop career fair featuring Lalamove, GCash, Japan Tobacco International (JTI), and many more for your job-hunting and adulting needs this May 20-21, 2021! Grab a chance to win merienda credits by (1/2)	1		1
@angels4thechil	«JTI was formed in 1999, when Japan Tobacco Inc. purchased the international tobacco operations of the US multinational R.J. Reynolds for \$ 7.8 billion.» https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan_Tobacco_International#History... For more on R.J.Reynolds, see:			
@Avere_Augere	«Scruton was criticized in 2002 for having written articles about smoking without disclosing that he was receiving a regular fee from Japan Tobacco International (JTI, formerly R. J. Reynolds).»			

@ramacharitbrc	The major players covered in the global hot tobacco market are Philip Morris International, Japan Tobacco International (JTI), British American Tobacco...			
@DunkinWedd	"Funded by British American Tobacco (BAT), Japan Tobacco International, Imperial Tobacco and Philip Morris International. When... exposed, the IEA claimed that its campaigns against tobacco regulation were unrelated to the money it had received."			
@Kingkongvapeuk	Japan Tobacco International Bhd (JTI Malaysia) called for concrete actions against the illegal trade of cigarettes, such as restrictions on shipments and points of entry.	2		
@vape_report	The Philippines' tobacco tax receipts have been substantially boosted by Japan Tobacco International's (JTI) recent expansion in the country. As of Feb. 18, the BIR had collected PHP29.1 billion (\$598.43 million), up 73.5% from 2020. #JTI #JAPAN #philippinestockmarket #tobacco	1		
@fita_sa	David Reynolds, who built Japan Tobacco International's program on countering the illicit tobacco trade, said BAT in South Africa is "notorious" for oversupplying the region.	2	2	1
@bworldph	The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) said it is running well ahead of its year-earlier pace on collections from the tobacco industry due to increased production volumes following an expansion by Japan Tobacco International (JTI) Philippines, Inc.			
@gnufs	It seems that Japan Tobacco (\$2914.T) did a very fine job (at least in traditional cigarettes) after buying RJR's international tobacco business in 1999, though. RJR's difference in performance before & after is stark.	2		1
@patch_summer	Well, your employer (the IEA) has received funding from British American Tobacco, Imperial Tobacco, Philip Morris International and Japan Tobacco International. Seems to be quite a clear link, no?	22	7	3
@TheVapeReport	Global E-cigarette and Vaping Market 2021 Status, Demand, Supply, Manufacturer, Influences Factors Analysis, Estimates and Forecasts to 2027 Japan Tobacco, International, NicQuid – FLA News – FLA News			
@mosabi_1988	Another fun fact: Japan Tobacco International also sells lung cancer pharmaceutical drugs. Seems like they want to have it all in-house, the illness and the cure	2		1

@vape_report	Japan Tobacco International Bhd (JTI Malaysia) called for concrete actions against the illegal trade of cigarettes, such as restrictions on shipments and points of entry.			
@KhmerTimes	Japan Tobacco International (JTI) in Cambodia has been recognized for its HR best practices as the Global Top Employer and became the first and the only company in the country to receive the certification from Top Employers Institute			
@NevMarsh	I have no idea whether 10% is right or not but feels like at 10% you have some momentum. You don't just start at 10%. You need to build to get there. BATSA held 71.4% of the market share, followed by Japan Tobacco International (JTI) (12%), and Philip Morris International (8.9%)			
@ramacharitbrc	The major companies in the Tobacco Products Market include Philip Morris International Inc.; Imperial Tobacco; Altria Group Inc; British American Tobacco; Japan Tobacco Inc...			
@ShethAnita	ALDI SÜD Group, Bower Swimwear, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Japan Tobacco International, Mars, Marshalls PLC, Outland Denim, Tesco, Thomson Reuters, released statement in support of the European Commission's Sustainable Corporate Governance Initiative.			
@ReportsMarkets	Global Tobacco-Free Nicotine Pouches Market CAGR Growth Forecast Outlook Altria Group, Imperial Brands, Swedish Match, British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International, Mac Baren Tobacco Company, Ministry of Snus, Nordic Noir Holding Ltd.			
@BusinessMirror	Japan Tobacco International (JTI), a leading global tobacco company headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, officially inaugurated the office of its Manila Global Business Service (GBS) Center recently.	1		
@TFWAnews	"We're determined to restart in 2021 with initiatives that add the most value to members and business partners" - new TFWA Board member Gemma Bateson, Japan Tobacco International #SpeakingPersonally	1		
@clo31741753	Congrats! Alejandro Valderrabano was appointed as Legal Director, CA+SA at JTI (Japan Tobacco International)			
@ECOZH	Japan Tobacco International commits to #NetZero by 2030! The UK tobacco manufacturer will reach net-zero emissions by procuring 100% #renewableenergy, transitioning its UK fleet to electric vehicles #EVs and diverting waste from landfill. https://edie.net/news/6/Japan-Tobacco-International-commits-to-net-zero-by-2030/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%20a0743b5e8b-dailynewsletter_COPY_937... by			
@CapitalFMMw	The Japan Tobacco International – JTI Leaf Malawi Limited stresses that it is committed to improving local people's access to health especially in rural areas. it follows the handover of 15 village clinics valued at K650 million to the ministry of health. #CFMNews #Malawi			

@TomLasseter	In recent weeks, tobacco companies Philip Morris International, Japan Tobacco, Imperial and Altria Group all raised their sales or profit targets, saying the industry had done better than expected, mostly in the United States and Europe			
@lhamtil	«In recent weeks, tobacco companies Philip Morris International Inc, Japan Tobacco Inc (JT), Imperial Brands Plc and Altria Group Inc all raised their sales or profit targets, saying the industry had done better than expected, mostly in the US and Europe.»			
@TheVapeReport	Vaping Market: Know about Impact of Covid-19 by Top Companies like – Nicquid, NicQuid, Philip Morris International, Inc., Imperial Brands, British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco, and more – re:Jerusalem			
@moonagedaydre16	We do not need more educational institutions that employ people who opposed regulation of tobacco smoking without revealing they were getting near enough £60k from Japan Tobacco International. And that's just the tip of their Thatcherite iceberg.			
@TheVapeReport	Global E-cigarette and Vaping Market 2020 Growth, Share, Trends, Opportunities And Focuses On Top Players Philip Morris International Inc., Japan Tobacco International – Eurowire https://thevapereport.com/global-e-cigarette-and-vaping-market-2020-growth-share-trends-opportunities-and-focuses-on-top-players-philip-morris-international-inc-japan-tobacco-international-eurowire/			
@pranavmehta09	as in news global sovereign funds temasek carlyle others international tobacco companies japan tobacco others bid for 51%stake in godfrey phillips tobacco india second biggest tobacco company after itc put on sale by lalit modi			
@DalbidEU	A Question of Trust? #MarkPawsey in #Rugby. The Conservative and 'Unionist' supporting a Brexit that will destroy the 'Union'. 2015 - Treated to hospitality worth £1,650 by Japan Tobacco International. Campaigned against many measures to limit the tobacco industry. #Unfit	9	6	
@CacheThatCheque	Japan Tobacco (2914)'s stock price just gets cheaper and cheaper as the yield reaches 8%. ESG investing has seen its stock price fall, but JT has continued to maintain stable earnings (60% international) with a strong moat as it is 1/3 owned by the government.	9		3
@SonjaMarx9	So far you've protected the sales of the 5 biggest tobacco companies, namely Altria, Philip Morris, BAT, Imperial Brands, Japan Tobacco International and a dozen of smaller ones. Great job, TFK.			
@ItsDylanGarcia	Cigarette manufacturer Japan Tobacco International (Philippines) Inc. is planning to increase its purchase of locally produced tobacco to support farmers reeling from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.			
@TheFinancialDi2	Japan Tobacco International, Inc. (@JTI_global) is studying further increasing its procurement of locally produced tobacco to support local growers reeling from the economic impact of #COVID19PH. #Tobacco #FilipinoFarmers #RecoverAsOne #Coronavirus			

@bworldph	Japan Tobacco International (Philippines) Inc. (JTI) is looking to increase its tobacco purchases from local farmers to more than 4.6 million kilograms (kg) next year, according to the Department of Finance (DoF).	3	3	
@BusinessMirror	The local unit of cigarette giant Japan Tobacco International (JTI) said it is looking at further hiking its procurement next year of locally produced tobacco from the current 4.6 million kilograms (kg) it has programmed to buy in 2021			
@Navarp	Also, According to Philip Morris, British American Tobacco, and Japan Tobacco International, Cigarettes actually cure lung cancer. Honestly, airplanes have been known places where disease spreads for some time. CDC has a page dedicated to it, there are commercial products, etc.			
@TheVapeReport	Research on E-cigarette and Vaping Market (impact of COVID-19) Industry Research Report 2020-2026: Japan Tobacco, International, NicQuid – seaview road https://thevaperreport.com/research-on-e-cigarette-and-vaping-market-impact-of-covid-19-industry-research-report-2020-2026-japan-tobacco-international-nicquid-seaview-road/			
@stobaxov	#trade JTI report warns of a 'Gathering Storm' in the black market JTI (Japan Tobacco International) has published a report, independently verified by Intrinsic Insight Ltd., entitled 'The Gathering Storm', on how the illegal tobacco trade are operating during the Covid-19 ...			
@EINTobaccoNews	Electric Smoking System Market 2020 Global Insights and Business Scenario – Philip Morris International, British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco, Imperial Brands, Altria, China tobacco, Korea Tobacco http://s.einnews.com/GrS6NYwteE			
@andii29	Pretty squalid outfit really Enjoyed the little story about Roger Scruton, a senior IEA member wrote a pamphlet that was highly critical of the WHO's stance on smoking without disclosing that he was being paid £54k a year by Japan Tobacco international	3		
@Abramjee	Brands belonging to multi-national companies, such as British American Tobacco SA (BATSA), Philip Morris International, Japan Tobacco International and Imperial Tobacco, have witnessed their market share fall from 77% to below 20%, according to the report by UCT's Research Unit..	10	3	2
@KennBur	International investigations reveal the world's biggest tobacco companies - Philip Morris International, British American Tobacco, Imperial, and Japan Tobacco International - are targeting kids at school. Share now to warn parents in your community! #ProtectKidsFromBigTobacco			
@EricBHawk	I am so proud to be JTI (Japan Tobacco International). Fantastic new global equal family leave policy from JTI (Japan Tobacco International) for all of my colleagues, offers a minimum of 20 weeks fully paid leave for respective emp... https://lnkd.in/e8CJwFn	4		
@Wdekanter	Zambian Farm Workers Risk Their Health for Japan Tobacco International - For your cigarettes?	5	5	
@exposetobacco	Sponsorship of events and reports on illicit trade is one way the #tobacco industry seeks to influence stakeholders and detract attention from the industry's own culpability. Japan Tobacco International has funded several	3	4	

@PILLAY_CGLM	Japan Tobacco International (JTI) and British American Tobacco SA (Batsa), have joined forces to lift the lockdown prohibition on the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products.		2	1
@Lizelle30281788	Japan Tobacco International joins BATSA to challenge lockdown tobacco sales ban in court			
@joburgtimescoza	Japan Tobacco International empowers Malambo with computers			
@HendrikGout	Controversial English philosopher Roger Scruton has died 12 January. Scruton promoted tobacco while secretly being paid by Japan Tobacco International. I hope some of the vile racist and homophobic philosophies he espoused die with him.	2		
@AshOrg	With the Japanese Government directly invested in Japan Tobacco International (JTI), Japanese media coverage of tobacco issues is very limited. Hear from our partners in the region on what they face.	8	6	
@CumDommings	The IEA receive funding from British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International, Imperial Tobacco and Philip Morris International AND are advocates of privatising the NHS			
@TakeAPartNow	Japan Tobacco International is being accused of child labor in Zimbabwe. A Human Rights Watch report previously found children as young as 11 were working on Zimbabwean #tobacco farms. Support an immediate government investigation into these allegations!	4	2	
@StayGroundedNet	What is absurd is that your astroturfed organisation (funded by Japan Tobacco International etc.) is claiming to represent consumers (btw we oppose reducing people to mere consumers) and work in their interest.	2		
@TakeAPartNow	Analysis by Senegal's Ministry of Health confirm cigarettes «sold in Africa by Philip Morris International and Japan Tobacco International have higher nicotine and carbon monoxide levels than those intended for the Swiss and European markets.»			
@messageplicity	Japan Tobacco is halving the price of starter kits for its reduced-risk cigarettes, as it struggles to compete against rival Philip Morris International.			
@SunZambian	TOBACCO COMPANY ROASTED FOR 'EXPLOITING' ZAMBIAN FARMERS JAPAN Tobacco International (JTI) should stop offering tobacco farmers in Zambia unrealistic prices compared to what it pays growers back home, says Brenda Chitindi https://thezambiansun.com/tobacco-company-roasted-for-exploiting-zambian-farmers/...			
@ruitendrop	International investigations reveal the world's biggest tobacco companies - Philip Morris International, British American Tobacco, Imperial, and Japan Tobacco International - are targeting kids at school. Share now to warn parents in your community!			
@Net2Ayurveda	Philip Morris, British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International and others are all working to improve and refine the technology that's gone into their existing HnB systems.			

@DrOliviaDoll1	Wonderful satirical tweet from Japan Tobacco International. Wraps itself in UN Sustainable Development Goals although SDG 3 is «Good Health and Well-Being»; claims high ranking for "Responsible Consumption and Production". Should credit comedian author. https://twitter.com/JTI_global/status/1169621213049753602	2	3	1
@TakeAPartNow	Japan Tobacco International is being accused of child labor in Zimbabwe. A Human Rights Watch report previously found children as young as 11 were working on Zimbabwean #tobacco farms. I support an immediate government investigation into these allegations!	5	5	
@ivanteece	Very happy to see Christiane Bisanzio, VP, Diversity & Inclusion at JTI (Japan Tobacco International) facilitating one of our sessions at LinkedIn's EMEA HQ on the 17th Sep.			
@ShedamsFitness	I was invited to speak on «Portion Control & Healthy Living» at the 2019 Employee Wellness Day of Japan Tobacco International #JTI ; and also take them through my Cardio Dance Session. Many thanks for having me!			
@ANCALERTS	«It will be disastrous.» Imposing higher taxes on cigarettes does not guarantee that people will stop smoking and revenue may also go down with the rise of smuggling, according to the head of Japan Tobacco International Philippines. #ANCHeadstart	33	17	5
@etienneleflour	Unbelievably, this year's Venice Biennale is sponsored by JAPAN TOBACCO INTERNATIONAL - global tobacco corporate!! Not only is the elite arts festival artwashing the migrant crisis, displaying a boat on which hundreds died, it's artwashing big tobacco!	22	20	3
@bucephalus424	Always will remeber him for writing about how smoking wasn't that bad for you and then it got revealed that he was being paid by Japan Tobacco International	2		1
@MaisonGladys	«Littlewood has spoken extensively against regulation of tobacco producing multinationals on behalf of the IEA, who receive long-term funding from British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International, Imperial Tobacco & cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris...» #PoliticsLive			
@icrict	According to the report, Imperial Brands, BAT and Gallaher, a subsidiary of Japan Tobacco International (JTI), made UK operating profits of more than £1bn between them in 2016 but paid £83.6m combined, a rate of less than 10%.		2	
@Doctor_Abiy	believe it or not .. what is now owned by Japan Tobacco International (timbaho monopol) was established by law as a monopoly!			

@EricBHawk	Interesting article regarding the implications of illicit trade in cigarettes. The loss of tax revenue can be devastating to communities. Public & private cooperation to fight criminality is the only way. JTI (Japan Tobacco International)IACC		1	
@gtc_sfu	Japan Tobacco unveils two «heat-not-burn» products, as it races against market leader Philip Morris International Inc for a larger share of the vaping space with conventional cigarettes steadily falling out of favor.	1	2	
@ItsBrandt	Google «Harmful effects of nicotine» by Aseem Mishra. Juul is now backed by Altria and used to be Japan Tobacco International. Blu is backed by Imperial Brands. Vuse by RJ Reynolds. The list goes on.		2	
@underoneceiling	Retail Sales Associate – AFRAH TOBACCO & CIGARETTES FACTORY – Ras al-Khaimah			
@Orooma_sd	Five new jobs are available on the Aroma website, in the areas of: management, and engineering. Introduction via DAL Group, Elsafwa Automobile co., Afrah Tobacco. We hope you will be with us on the OC2021 attendance list, don't miss the opportunity! Follow us in the coming days to learn more about the details of the Aroma 2021 conference!	3	3	1
@Ashante14527204	TOP AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN TOBACCO PRODUCING LEAF; 1. Malawi 2.Tanzania 3. Zimbabwe 4. Zambia 5. Mozambique			1
@oom_Ruan	All i've been seeing is gold leaf tobacco, mozambique brands and chinese brand ciggs, where are the good stuff supposedly supplied? I'm tired of shitty smokes.	1		
@bigrodRLC	at bro these BATCH Nubs from : BATCH NUB the leaf used is sourced from a small and exclusive tobacco plantation that produces premium small batch leaf, the same is true for BATCH XXX which uses leaf sourced from Kenya and Mozambique. GOTTA CHECKUM OUT	1	1	
@bigrodRLC	Rod, thank you for your question, in the case of BATCH NUB the leaf used is sourced from a small and exclusive tobacco plantation that produces premium small batch leaf, the same is true for BATCH XXX which uses leaf sourced from Kenya and Mozambique.	2		



ADDRESS

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