



POLICY MEMO



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Selected Findings (Year 1) from the Alcohol Environment Protocol component of the International Alcohol Control Study (South Africa) and Policy Considerations

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Background to the International Alcohol Control Study (S Africa)

In May 2010 the Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol was approved by Member States at the 63rd session of the World Health Assembly in Geneva. A major goal of the Strategy is to support and complement public health policies in Member States. The Strategy recognises that harmful use of alcohol can be reduced if effective actions that are based on current scientific knowledge, available evidence on effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, experience and good practice, are taken by countries (World Health Organization, 2010). The Strategy, however, acknowledges that not all policy options and interventions will be applicable or relevant for all member states.

While there is evidence for the effectiveness of the strategies referred to in the WHO Global Strategy to reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol (World Health Organization 2010) in high income countries, where most evaluation research has been carried out (Anderson et al., 2009; Babor et al., 2010), there is a need for more evidence from Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) to stimulate alcohol policy adoption and implementation on a wider scale. In 2012 The Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drug Research Unit (ATODRU) of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) agreed to participate in a multi-national International Alcohol Control (IAC) Study that aims to document the alcohol policy environment in South Africa and assess the impact of existing alcohol policies and changes in policies on alcohol consumption, including both commercial and informal beverages, by adults and adolescents in South Africa.

AREAS FOR POLICY ACTION CONTAINED IN THE WHO GLOBAL ALCOHOL STRATEGY

- Leadership, awareness and commitment
- Health services' responses
- Community action
- Drink-driving policies and countermeasures
- Availability of alcohol
- Marketing of alcoholic beverages
- Pricing policies
- Reducing the negative consequences of drinking and alcohol intoxication
- Reducing the public health impact of illicit and informally produced alcohol
- Monitoring and surveillance

The IAC study supports the goal of improving overall population health, by addressing the harmful use of alcohol as a key risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and aims to provide knowledge on specific factors that have an impact on policies on the ground; contexts in which they are effective, how different people with different demographic characteristics (age, socio-economic status (SES), gender) are differentially affected by the different policies, improved knowledge about the alcohol policy environment in South Africa (strengths and weaknesses, with recommendations for improvements), a more in-depth understanding of the forms and patterns of alcohol consumption of diverse groups of people in South Africa, and better understanding of the regulatory environment (inclusive of police enforcement around liquor outlet regulations, drinking driving regulations and alcohol consumption).

One of the main objectives of the IAC involves documenting the alcohol policy environment via the Alcohol Environment Protocol (AEP) focusing specifically on availability, taxation and influences on alcohol prices, drink driving, and marketing and promotion. This AEP is being conducted in conjunction with a household survey, the IAC Survey, of alcohol consumption patterns among community members in Tshwane. The policy memo presents selected findings from the AEP sub-study that was conducted in 2013 in Tshwane, Gauteng and includes a listing of policy considerations relating to each of the findings.

Methodology for the Alcohol Environment Protocol

The AEP included four separate sub-studies each employing specific research methods and specific questionnaires (see Table 1).

Table 1: Methodology used for completing different sections of AEP

AEP area	Methodology followed for obtaining data	Coverage
Drink driving	16 telephone interviews with stakeholders/key informants with knowledge of drink and driving law enforcement	Tshwane/Gauteng
Licensing and compliance	16 face-to-face interviews with persons knowledgeable on alcohol control policies	Gauteng
Pricing	Face-to-face interviews with owners or managers at each of the following locations in each of 16 enumeration areas: one shebeen, one restaurant/cafe, one tavern, one pub, one bar, one night club/disco, one supermarket and one liquor store and 'other common premises'	Selected from areas included in IAC community survey
Internal questionnaire covering – South African policy	Completed by two of the investigators (CP and PP) synthesizing information drawn from key policy, strategy reporting and research documents collected over many years as well as a scoping of more recent material using different methods including contacting information gatekeepers in Tshwane and Gauteng areas	National

If there is sufficient funding the sub-study as a whole (or at least parts thereof) will be repeated in 2014/15 and will thus reflect any changes that will have taken place in the South African policy environment in the interim. Additionally, understanding the policy landscape in South Africa and where interventions are needed, we believe it will be useful to consider the findings of the AEP together with the findings from the IAC community surveys. The IAC community surveys were initiated in May 2014 and investigated the influence of policies on (i) alcohol consumption among a general population sample of adolescents (aged 16-17 years) and adults (aged 18-65 years), and (ii) on selected mediating variables such as alcohol purchasing behaviours (place and time of purchase, amounts purchased and price paid linked to specific on- and off-license premises); ease

of access to alcohol purchase; alcohol marketing measures; social supply (including who supplies and age of supplier); perceptions of alcohol affordability and availability and salience of price. It is anticipated that the IAC surveys will be completed by September 2014.

Selected preliminary findings and policy considerations

The table below lists selected findings from the AEP study that was conducted in 2013 and includes a listing of policy considerations relating to each of the findings. The preliminary policy recommendations are based on evidence-based strategies reviewed by Babor et al. (2010) and WHO (2010) and the experience of the first author (CP) in alcohol-policy research, alcohol-policy development forums and in technical and other consultations over more than two decades with the WHO and other stakeholders .

Table 2: Selected findings from the AEP (Year 1) and preliminary policy recommendations

Area	Findings	Preliminary policy recommendations
Drink driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confusion about maximum permissible BAC levels for professional drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Investigate</u> the extent to which professional drivers and persons who own or manage vehicles know about and comply with the 0.02g/100ml BAC limit and the extent of legal enforcement. <u>Educate</u> the general public, including large and small businesses, on this issue
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of informants indicated that drivers do not have their BAC routinely tested following an accident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Open a dialogue for discussing when it might be prudent (and manageable) for the police to test drivers (or arrange for others to test drivers) following certain accidents</u> (e.g. when someone is severely injured or killed)
Licensing & compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On- & off-premise sales of alcohol are 'completely available' in many areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Investigate</u> the extent of the availability of on-off premise sales and geographic variability. Move ahead with plans to <u>'mature' liquor retail sector in informal settlements</u> (e.g. bring unregulated outlets into regulated market, move existing outlets to business nodes, close down outlets that will never be able to comply)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of visible policing, shebeens operating without the restrictions of licensed outlets, bribery & corruption involving officials tasked with compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Investigate</u> these areas further with community members; community policing forums; police (district commissioners) and at provincial/national level, municipalities, licensing officials, & environmental health officers <u>Discuss</u> with National Liquor Regulatory Authority & Department of Trade & Industry, provincial Departments of Economic Affairs & Tourism on strategies for <u>moving forward on regulating unlicensed outlets</u> and obstacles to be overcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View expressed that there should be limits on quantities that can be purchased at off-premise consumption outlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For off-site consumption, there is a need for <u>properly kept registers of sales</u> of quantities of alcohol above a certain amount and that persons purchasing large quantities produce a valid liquor license. Relates to <u>training & enforcement</u>

Area	Findings	Preliminary policy recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum purchase age regulations are generally ignored and not enforced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This issue should be taken up with <u>provincial liquor authorities</u> who grant licenses and South African Police Services (SAPS) for enforcement. Consideration should be given to undertaking <u>controlled purchase operations</u> to assess whether underage patrons can purchase alcohol <u>Sanctions should be imposed on establishments that ignore minimum purchase age regulations</u>, with progressively more severe penalties for repeat offences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically alcohol is sold 78hrs/week in off-consumption outlets and between 112 and 168 in on-consumption outlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider <u>implementing a tiered system for on-consumption sales</u> having less hours for outlets in residential areas, slightly more in business nodes in residential areas and the most in entertainment districts or business districts outside of residential areas. Concurrently consider <u>implementing a system where on-consumption outlets in residential areas have reduced hours on weekday nights (Sunday-Thursday)</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Density of on- and off-consumption outlets is not restricted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider implementing a strategy to <u>reduce the density of on- and off- site consumption liquor outlets</u> (but in certain areas only after shebeens have been brought into the regulated market)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-consumption sales to intoxicated persons is an issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and enforcement is required to ensure that alcohol is not served to obviously intoxicated patrons Needs to be taken up with <u>provincial liquor authorities, municipalities, community police forums, & SAPS</u>
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are few restrictions on particular types of sales promotions or incentives for purchasing alcohol beverages at their points of sale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider <u>implementing greater restrictions on advertising at points of sale</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View that regulations on advertising and marketing of alcohol are not well enforced? The problem is that the compliance with the ARA code is self-regulated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider <u>setting up a system whereby all advertisements are pre-vetted</u> by a body without vested interest rather than subject to the Advertising Standards Authority/ARA code <u>Checking and ruling on compliance should no longer rest with Advertising Standards Authority</u>, but with an independent regulatory body
Pricing and taxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In most cases prices are greater in shebeens than taverns (as expected) – except for beer (750ml) & cider (600ml) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Investigate</u>, in areas where there are both liquor stores and shebeens, does the price differential lead to more sales from shebeens? How are shebeens able to sell at cheaper prices than liquor stores who buy directly from the wholesalers whereas shebeens have to buy from shebeens or Macro-type stores?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa follows ad valorem taxation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider <u>moving towards the 2C1 (Two-Chosen-One) approach</u> (Sorpaisarn et al., 2012) which involves the calculation of both ad valorem and specific taxation (volumetric taxation) – and selecting whichever is higher, to move the population towards medium strength alcoholic beverages and thus influence both youth/potential new drinkers as well as heavy drinkers.

Conclusions

While the findings are not representative of the country of a whole, they do suggest that there are weaknesses in many of the prevailing alcohol policies in various domains or else in the implementation/enforcement of the policies. The preliminary recommendations are presented for consideration by relevant authorities, policy activists, researchers and other stakeholders.

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