

# PUBLIC HEALTH CAMPAIGNS

“The irony is that the tobacco industry uses images of health to sell death, while health organizations use images of death to sell health.”

—YUSSUF SALOOJEE, WORLD LUNG CONFERENCE, CAPETOWN, 2007

Legislative and tax interventions to reduce smoking rates alone are unlikely to be accepted without public awareness and support for tobacco control interventions. Mass communication, health education, and reliable information are essential elements for tobacco control success.

Most governments and school systems have meager budgets to develop, implement, and sustain comprehensive school-based programs, including sound policies, cessation services, and effective anti-tobacco curricula. In many countries, especially where health education is under-funded and under-resourced, the tobacco industry seizes the opportunity to burnish its public image by funding youth smoking prevention programs. Unsurprisingly, most industry-sponsored youth programs employ measures known to have minimal impact on youth smoking uptake. In many cases, they encourage smoking by associating the behavior with aspirational ideals of maturity and freedom (smoking as an “adult choice”).

Much of the world’s health education happens outside the classroom: through media, movies, popular culture, and the Internet. Earned media, such as unpaid news stories about tobacco control activities, and social media are important forms of tobacco control promotion. Because social networks are powerful propagators of smoking behavior, social networking websites are among the powerful new media platforms available for dialogue, support, and dissemination of anti-smoking health information.



! “NO SENSIBLE, ethical person will take money from drug dealers for a youth programme to prevent drug abuse. No one . . . would accept money from child pornographers to teach children about sexual harassment. So why should governments . . . accept money from the tobacco industry to teach young people not to smoke?”  
—World Health Organization Western Pacific Regional Office, Tobacco Free Initiative, 2002

## YOUTH PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Effective versus ineffective measures. Campaigns sponsored by the tobacco industry tend to be ineffective.

LIKELY TO BE EFFECTIVE <i>If framed within a comprehensive tobacco control program</i>	LIKELY TO BE INEFFECTIVE <i>Establishes youth prevention and education as stand-alone issues</i>
Does not position smoking and tobacco use as a “grown-up activity” but something that affects all ages	Positions tobacco as “adult” and forbidden. Advocates messages such as: • “Youth should not smoke.” • “Smoking is an adult decision.” • “Only adults should smoke.” • “Obey the law.” • “Just say no.”
Supports tobacco tax increases	No mention of tobacco tax increases
Supports total advertising bans	Stresses peer pressure as the main cause of teen smoking, without acknowledging the role of advertising and promotion, especially those targeted at youth
Supports comprehensive smoke-free areas	Ignores the issue of smoke-free areas
Bans display of tobacco products (e.g., as in Thailand). Limiting the distribution channels (some store chains/pharmacies stopped selling tobacco)	Emphasizes restriction of access to tobacco products to youth through ID cards, signs prohibiting sales to minors, policies to raise the age limit for tobacco sales
Emphasizes that nicotine is addictive	Depicts smoking as an “adult choice”
Discusses risks associated with smoking to people of all ages	Depicts “youth smoking” as the only problem
Addresses cessation among all smokers, young and adult	Does not address cessation at any age

## WHO World No Tobacco Day campaign themes

1988	Tobacco or Health: Choose Health
1989	Women and Tobacco
1990	Growing Up Without Tobacco
1991	Tobacco in Public Places and on Public Transport
1992	Tobacco at the Workplace
1993	Health Services, including Health Personnel, Against Tobacco
1994	The Media Against Tobacco
1995	The Economics of Tobacco
1996	Sports and the Arts Without Tobacco
1997	“United for a Tobacco-Free World”
1998	Growing Up Without Tobacco
1999	Cessation
2000	Tobacco Kills, Don’t Be Duped
2001	Secondhand Smoke Kills. Let’s Clear the Air
2002	Tobacco-Free Sports: Play It Clean
2003	Tobacco-Free Film/Tobacco-Free Fashion
2004	Tobacco and Poverty
2005	Health Professionals Against Tobacco
2006	Tobacco: Deadly in Any Form or Disguise
2007	Smoke-Free Environments
2008	Tobacco-Free Youth
2009	Tobacco Health Warnings

! IN THE FIRST six months of Australia’s famous ‘Every cigarette is doing you damage’ campaign, smoking rates in Australia fell 1.4 percent, representing 190,000 fewer smokers.  
—S. Stillman, QUIT, Australia, 2007

“NO ONE SHOULD welcome the tobacco industry’s youth anti-smoking campaigns, a cynical attempt to make smoking seem more grown up and even more appealing to youth.”  
—Tobacco Free Kids and ASH UK, 2001

“A HALLMARK OF all [tobacco] industry designed efforts is the absence of the most effective tools for combating youth tobacco use.”  
—Tobacco Free Kids, 2005



“Youth programs support [our] objective of discouraging unfair and counterproductive federal, state and local restrictions on cigarette advertising.”  
—U.S. Tobacco Institute, 1991

