

A conversation with Yolonda Richardson, December 12, 2017

Participants

- Yolonda Richardson – Executive Vice President, Global Programs, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
- James Snowden – Research Consultant, GiveWell

Note: These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Ms. Yolonda Richardson.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Ms. Richardson of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK) as part of its investigation into tobacco control. Conversation topics included case studies of CTFK's successful work, CTFK's strategic priorities, and the approximate cost of running an advocacy campaign.

History of CTFK

CTFK was founded in 1996. For the first ten years of its existence, it worked exclusively in the United States, with the goal of generating demand for tobacco control policy change at the federal, state, and local levels. CTFK's advocacy contributed to the passage in 2009 of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which granted the FDA the authority to regulate tobacco. CTFK has also been involved in and provided assistance to nearly all of the successful state-level campaigns to pass smoke-free laws, increase tobacco taxes, fund tobacco prevention programs, and increase the tobacco age of sale to 21.

Since 2006, CTFK has received funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies as part of the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use. Using this funding, CTFK has expanded to work on tobacco policy around the world.

CTFK's work on tobacco control

The Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use

The Bloomberg Initiative works to implement the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), and focuses its work on the countries in the world with the highest tobacco consumption rates.

CTFK's role in the Bloomberg Initiative is to catalyze and facilitate policy changes in countries by building campaigns and creating public demand for tobacco control policies. Other members of the Bloomberg Initiative include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation, which does surveillance work; Johns Hopkins University, which provides technical training; Vital Strategies, which supports mass media campaigns; and The Union, which co-administers global competitive grants with CTFK.

The MPOWER package

CTFK works primarily using the WHO FCTC's MPOWER package, which asks countries to:

- **Monitor** tobacco use and prevention policies
- **Protect** people from tobacco smoke
- **Offer** help to quit tobacco use
- **Warn** about the dangers of tobacco
- **Enforce** bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship
- **Raise** taxes on tobacco

In practice, this means conducting surveillance, encouraging cessation, and pushing four policy recommendations:

- 1. Arguing for elimination of indoor smoking in public places**
 - Eliminating indoor smoking reduces tobacco consumption by reducing the exposure to second-hand smoke. In addition, advocacy to eliminate indoor smoking involves educating the public about the harmful effects of secondhand smoke in order to prevent the normalization of smoking.
- 2. Displaying health warnings**
 - In order to effectively warn the public regarding the hazards of smoking, CTFK pushes for warnings about the dangers of smoking tobacco on cigarette packaging. There are data showing that the larger and more graphic a health warning is, the more effective it is in discouraging people to begin to smoke and increasing the desire of smokers to quit. Pictorial warnings are especially important in countries with low literacy rates.
- 3. Banning advertising**
 - Comprehensive advertising bans aim to denormalize smoking by making smoking less culturally attractive and less available in the public consciousness.
- 4. Increasing tobacco taxes**
 - The evidence that tobacco taxes and tobacco consumption are directly anti-correlated is the strongest result in tobacco control research. Unfortunately, tobacco taxes are the most difficult intervention to implement, because the tobacco industry knows they are effective and therefore puts significant effort into opposing them.

CTFK's understanding is that there is strong scientific evidence that these four policies – both separately and as a cluster – are effective at driving down tobacco consumption rates.

Impact

CTFK has supported work on tobacco policy in ~60 countries around the world. Some of its successful work has involved:

- Helping cities implement public smoking bans
- Supporting national governments to pass tobacco control laws
- Suing governments to fulfill their FCTC obligations
- Helping to pass bills that increase tobacco taxes
- Engaging in media campaigns to advocate for graphic health warnings
- Supporting local groups to effectively implement new policies, once passed

CTFK has logged ~250 policy changes as direct results of the campaigns it has supported in its ten years of working globally. Using prevalence data from the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) from before and after its work, CTFK finds that these policy changes have resulted in declines in the prevalence of smoking.

Bloomberg estimates that ~30 million lives have been saved as result of the work that CTFK and other organizations have done as part of the Bloomberg Initiative.

Civil society engagement

CTFK believes it is important to financially support local civil society engagement on tobacco control, because although governments have made a commitment to reduce tobacco usage under the FCTC, they have many other issues to deal with, and are therefore unlikely to prioritize tobacco control without public pressure to do so. CTFK believes these campaigns must be led by local organizations.

CTFK's structure

CTFK works with local partners on all of its advocacy campaigns. It funds these partners and provides any technical assistance they may need, supporting them from the conception of a campaign all the way through the implementation of the policy. CTFK has four different units that provide support to its partners on the ground:

Grant unit:

- Provides financial and grant management support to CTFK's local partners
- Runs both rapid response grants and a global competitive grant process

Legal team:

- Reviews legislation that is being proposed at the country level, providing technical and/or drafting assistance
- Trains local lawyers to work on tobacco control
- Supports local advocacy groups to sue governments in countries that are in violation of the FCTC

- Helps governments defend the legitimacy of their tobacco control laws

Communications team:

- Helps local partners design communications strategies
- Trains journalists around the world to cover tobacco control issues in a way that reflects scientific evidence
- Runs fellowship programs to train media houses that wish to do in-depth reporting on tobacco control
- Provides media houses with funding for investigative journalism

Research team:

- Manages a global research center, which aggregates best practices for tobacco control
- Provides information to local groups to counter industry arguments
- Responds to governments' rapid requests for information
- Commissions local research to support policy positions

Tobacco Industry Accountability Team:

- Monitors and documents industry wrongdoing
- Designs and implements campaigns to raise awareness and counter industry interference in local policymaking

Together, these teams provide the resources, training, and ongoing technical assistance to build the capacity of local civil society organizations to plan and implement effective advocacy campaigns for policy change.

In-country teams

In the large countries where CTFK works, it has in-country teams providing real-time support to its local partners and grantees. Like CTFK's main team at its headquarters, these teams usually include a lawyer, a person who is responsible for communications, and a person who is comfortable designing and implementing advocacy campaigns.

Funding

Funding for tobacco control

The main funders of tobacco control are Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). Because Bloomberg has made such a large funding commitment and because of a global focus on communicable diseases, tobacco control (and particularly civil society groups working on tobacco control) has not attracted a variety of other donors.

The UK recently set up a fund to support countries that wish to fulfill their duties under the FCTC. This funding goes directly to governments.

CTFK's funding sources

CTFK has multiple budgets for its global work from different sources:

- **Bloomberg Philanthropies** – Primarily funds work in Bloomberg's 10 priority countries.
- **The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** – Primarily funds work in BMGF's 10 priority countries in Africa.
- **The Anti-Tobacco Trade Litigation Fund** – Supports governments of low- and middle-income countries that have been sued by tobacco companies; co-funded by BMGF and Bloomberg.

Allocation

Approximately ~25% of CTFK's budget is used to support its headquarters; the remaining ~75% goes to individual countries, either in the form of grants and contracts, or directly to work on the ground, such as engaging media firms and employing people on the ground.

Approximate cost of running a campaign

Costs per country are mostly fixed, although some costs might be variable, such as paid media work or the price of travel. Because of this, campaign costs do not scale linearly with population – in a large country such as Brazil or China, CTFK spends ~\$250,000-\$300,000 per year on a campaign, while its average grant in a medium-sized country is ~\$150,000 per year.

CTFK usually tries to create a coalition of partners in each country, both because different organizations have different competencies, and because when multiple organizations work together they are less easily intimidated by the tobacco industry.

Ideally, CTFK would like to have four partners on the ground in each country, and would fund each partner at ~\$150,000 per year. Accounting for additional money spent on technical assistance, it would cost CTFK between ~\$800,000 and ~\$850,000 per year to run a campaign.

Possible uses of additional funding

Non-MPOWER work

CTFK is constrained in how it can use funding from Bloomberg because Bloomberg primarily wants to work using the MPOWER measures. This means that when CTFK is in a country that faces an issue outside of those four policy prescriptions, it has to negotiate with Bloomberg on whether it can invest resources. With funding from other sources, it would be able to address these issues more easily.

Corporate campaigns

CTFK would like to strengthen its competency in corporate accountability, so that it can be more proactive in confronting the tobacco industry. CTFK has a small amount

of funding for this from Bloomberg, but is very interested in expanding its work in this area.

Geographic diversity

BMGF and Bloomberg both impose geographic restrictions on CTFK's work. BMGF works only in Africa, and Bloomberg primarily focuses on its ten priority countries, though it lets CTFK work elsewhere if a rapid response is needed.

CTFK has now been working in Bloomberg's priority countries for 10 years, and many of these countries are now at the point where they have implemented policies, so CTFK needs to consider what the next stages of its work will be. This will involve developing strategies to keep prevalence rates in the priority countries declining, as well as expanding to the next highest priority countries.

Work in small countries

CTFK would like the flexibility to be able to respond to any country that is interested in reducing tobacco consumption, regardless of size. It does not currently work in many small countries because doing so is not very cost-effective in terms of absolute numbers of smokers, but it could be very cost-effective in terms of prevalence reduction. For example, in areas such as Eastern Europe and Latin America, the countries are small but the prevalence of smoking is very high.

CTFK's other work

E-cigarettes

CTFK recognizes e-cigarettes as a potential smoking cessation tool, but the scientific evidence on this issue is still inconclusive. Though e-cigarettes do not confer the carcinogens that come from burning tobacco, they can still have harmful effects. Their impacts on cessation of smoking (encouraging or discouraging) and on youth initiation of tobacco use are not fully understood. CTFK believes that until the science shows that e-cigarettes are less harmful and assist people in quitting smoking, they should not be marketed to or available to young people because many e-cigarettes contain nicotine, an addictive substance that negatively impacts brain development. Moreover, use of e-cigarettes by young people could encourage initiation of broader tobacco use.

Regulation

Many low-income countries lack the technical capacity to effectively regulate e-cigarettes, so CTFK has advised that these countries completely ban e-cigarettes unless and until there are data supporting the claim that e-cigarettes reduce tobacco consumption. Several countries have followed this suggestion.

In countries with strong regulatory infrastructure, CTFK encourages governments to determine the best way to regulate e-cigarettes. This means that e-cigarettes are regulated quite differently in different countries, including as a medical device or a tobacco product.

Non-tobacco work

CTFK is increasingly working on public health issues other than tobacco that can be impacted by policy changes, including obesity, road safety, cardiovascular health, and drowning prevention. CTFK's understanding is that there is strong evidence that policy work in all of these areas can be highly impactful, though the evidence is not as strong as that for tobacco control.

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