



HEALTHY INDIA ALLIANCE
for prevention and control of NCDs

PRESS NOTE
June 11, 2019

Healthy India Alliance calls for urgent multi-sectoral alcohol policy action in India

New Lancet study highlights 38% increase in alcohol use among Indians (from 2010 to 2017) - a deviation from the national NCD target of reducing alcohol consumption by 10% by 2025

Alcohol poses serious threat to sustainable development and public health, manifesting its severe outcomes through multiple Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), adversely affecting physical and mental health. Over the years, consumption of alcoholic beverages, particularly among young people and women, has gained increasing popularity and social acceptance.

"Alcohol drags people into poverty and adversely affect their families and entire communities. The direct and indirect costs of alcohol harm to the household is the biggest barrier in sustainable development. Alcohol harm is jeopardizing human capital and draining out all govt. welfare measures and family earnings." Mr Suneel Vatsyayan, Chairperson, Nada India Foundation

The study published in The Lancet (citation below), has alarmingly revealed that India is among those nations where there has been a steepest increase in consumption. From 2010 to 2017, the per capita consumption of alcohol has hiked from 4.3 liters and 5.9 liters, which translates into a 38% increase among Indians.

This steep rise in alcohol use in India can be attributed to number of factors including changing perceptions of Indians around alcohol use, easy access unregulated alcohol marketing and promotions such as offers at point of consumption (ladies night, happy hours), very high exposure to alcohol use in movies with full songs dedicated to drinking alcohol." Dr Monika Arora, Executive Director, HRIDAY

Under the National Multisectoral Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NMAP), the Government of India has set a national target for *10% reduction in alcohol use by 2025*. One of the targets under the National Health Policy 2017 (NHP), is, *'To reduce premature mortality from cardiovascular diseases, diabetes or chronic respiratory diseases and cancer by 25% by 2025'*. Alcohol control is a critical component to reduce the disease burden and deaths caused due to these NCDs. Goal 3.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also highlights the need for strengthening the prevention and treatment of alcohol use.

The alarming findings from the Lancet study do not bode well for these critical indicators mentioned in the NMAP, NHP and SDGs. They underscore the need for urgent attention towards stronger alcohol control measures, pan-India.

Currently, alcohol is eighth in risk factor rankings for death and disability, and is responsible for 50 lakh deaths in India annually. Such a mammoth public health challenge warrants a comprehensive nationwide multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder response, to effectively address issues related to its prevention and control. There is a need to introduce a National Alcohol Control Policy under a Multisectoral umbrella with measures prescribed for both demand and supply side actions.

"Alcohol use during teenage years negatively affects two important regions of the brain Hippocampus (affecting memory and learning) and Prefrontal lobe (affecting planning, judgment, decision making, impulse control and language). Evidence shows that the more teenagers delay their alcohol drinking, the

less likely they are to become regular consumers, as adults and thus, they can avoid alcohol-related problems later in life.” Dr Swati Bhave, Executive Director, Association of Adolescent and Child Care in India.

Some of the key alcohol control measures that need urgent attention in India are:

- Comprehensive ban on all forms of alcohol advertising, promotion and sponsorship, including surrogate advertising of non-alcoholic products and online promotions, particularly on social media and depiction in movies and online streaming content;
- A uniform minimum legal drinking age (25 years) to check drinking among adolescents and young adults, with a robust strategy to check age at Points of Sale;
- Appropriate taxation across all forms of alcohol;
- Stringent enforcement of drink driving laws and regulations;
- Denormalisation of alcohol use as a social practice, through comprehensive and audience-specific health promotion campaigns;

About the Healthy India Alliance (HIA):

The Healthy India Alliance (India NCD Alliance) is a coalition of multi-sectoral Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to address NCDs by generating awareness, building capacity, empowering adolescents, youth and patients and advocating for health promoting norms and policies (www.healthyindiaalliance.org). The Alliance accords high priority to multi-component NCD prevention strategies, addressing multiple risk factors and issues across the health and non-health sectors, which are key to attain India’s NCD targets and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). HRIDAY serves to be the Secretariat of the Alliance.

HIA member organisations:

1. Association for Adolescent and Child Care in India
2. Alzheimer’s and Related Disorders Society of India
3. Cancer Foundation of India
4. Centre for Chronic Disease Control
5. Dakshayani and Amravati Health and Education (DakshamA)
6. Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth (HRIDAY)
7. Indian Cancer Society
8. Madras Diabetes Research Foundation
9. Nada India Foundation
10. Pallium India
11. Public Health Foundation of India
12. Sundaram Arulrhaj Hospital
13. The Union South East Asia

Special invitees:

1. Ms. Shoba John
2. Vital Strategies

Lancet study citation:

Manthey J, Shield KD, Rylett M, Hasan OS, Probst C, Rehm J. Global alcohol exposure between 1990 and 2017 and forecasts until 2030: a modelling study. The Lancet. 2019 May 7.

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