

Report on Campaign to Counter British American Tobacco's Battle of Minds Program



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Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) recently joins hands with the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids in the fight against tobacco. A special campaign was designed to save youth from the misleading tactics of the tobacco industry, especially the British American Tobacco Company (BAT). The BAT is organizing its annual competition "Battle of Minds" in 27 countries including Pakistan. For this purpose, BAT is calling applications from the university youth. It was announced by the BAT that the winner will get up to \$50,000 British pounds and an internship with BAT. Through this competition, BAT wants to use the young mind to sell deadly cigarettes and maximize profit at the cost of public health.

SSDO initiated a campaign to counter the misleading narrative of BAT to capture young talented minds and use them for fueling tobacco use-related death and diseases. SSDO has organized a number of activities including walks, talk shows, and social media campaign to raise awareness among youth on the harmful impact of tobacco use. As a part of the campaign awareness walks were organized in Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, and Bahawalpur.

SSDO in collaboration with Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids held an awareness walk at 4:00 pm, 24th June 2022 in front of the National Press Club, Islamabad with the slogan "Tobacco Free Pakistan". The aim was to counter British American Tobacco's "Battle of the Minds" competition, a challenge aimed at attracting youth with a hefty prize money.

The goal was to gather common citizens on a single platform where they could collectively raise their voice and let their thoughts be heard by the mainstream media and the general public. SSDO mobilized and collected citizens from an array of diverse backgrounds such as civil society

organizations, journalists, lawyers, and activists. The most energized of the participants were the youth, who staunchly protested against BAT's campaign, and pledged to ensure a tobacco free Pakistan. Students expressed that smoking has incredibly dangerous consequences for health, leading to disease and early death. A student stated, "The worst about smoking is that it not only has negative consequences for the smoker, but that secondhand smoke is equally deadly. That is why we demand from the government to ensure that ban on smoking in public should be strictly enforced".

Speaking at the event, Syed Kausar Abbas, Executive Director SSDO stated, "BAT's campaign is needs to be firmly tackled. They are trying to manipulate youth into using their products. However, I am ecstatic to see that youth are the ones who are most actively participating in this walk, advocating to promote healthy behaviors."

Numerous participants expressed their gratitude to SSDO for organizing such an event where people from all walks of life could gather together to raise their voices against Big Tobacco and allow them a platform to verbalize their thoughts. They also pledged to do their part in ensuring a tobacco free Pakistan, and urged the government to also ensure stricter implementation of laws for compliance.

After the walk, Info News Network, SSDO's media wing, conducted interviews with the youth present at the event, where they expressed how tobacco was an incredibly dangerous and addicting substance, and that they want the government to strictly implement tobacco ban to promote smoke-free zones. Afterward, the event was concluded at around 5:00 pm. Interviews available at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rdS2w_4k-E

SSDO arranged another awareness walk on June 24, 2022, at Bahawalpur Press Club. The aim was to increase public awareness of the consequences of tobacco use and reduce the influence of the tobacco industry on the young generation. Participants were raising slogans "We want tobacco-free Pakistan" Ms. Aiman Shah-Program Officer-SSDO addressed the occasion. She highlighted the deceptive marketing tactics of the tobacco industry to trap young people. She added that nearly 163000 die every year in Pakistan due to tobacco-related diseases. The tobacco industry is targeting young people through the marketing of deadly products. She further said that Pakistan can't afford the health cost of tobacco use. We all should play our due role to save young people from tobacco use.

Another awareness walk was organized on June 25, 2022, at Multan Press Club to promote tobacco-free Pakistan. On this occasion, the participants of the walk chanted the slogan "We need a tobacco-free Pakistan" Speaking on the occasion, well-known social leader Alhaj Muhammad Ashraf Qureshi said that smoking has destroyed our young generation, smoking is the basis of all drugs, heroin, and marijuana, including other drug addicts. Young people are the victims of the tobacco industry. Social leader Malik Mohammad Omar Kamboh said that smoking is a poison for society. He further said that to promote a smoking-free society, we all have to make some efforts to save youth from deadly products. Social leader Salman Elahi Qureshi Advocate said that we all need a society free from smoking. Considering this campaign as a national cause, we all need to fight for the future of the country. He mentioned Prohibition

of Smoking and Protection of Non-Smokers Health Ordinance, 2002. He further added that law is not being implemented in its true spirit. Walks have earned good media coverage in national and local newspapers.

As a part of the campaign, an interview of Malik Imran Ahmed, Country Representative-Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids was conducted on famous YouTube channel Info News about



the ongoing campaign to counter British American Tobacco's "Battle of the Minds" competition, a challenge aimed at saving youth from BAT tact and promoting 'Battle for Health' Campaign. He highlighted the tobacco control-related challenges and how the tobacco industry is targeting youth to enhance the sale of deadly products. Interview available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7D3yFjo6sE>

A social media campaign was run on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to sanitize youth about tobacco-related harms and how BAT is planning to utilize talented youth to enhance market share and profits. SSDO communication team has developed eye-catching social media messages. Total outreach during the campaign was 12163, Facebook 4289, Twitter 7545, and Instagram 329. Links are given below:

<https://www.facebook.com/SSDOPakistan>

<https://twitter.com/SSDOPakistan>

https://www.instagram.com/ssdo_pakistan/



Islamabad



Multan



Bahawalpur

Media Coverage:



News Links:

<https://technologytimes.pk/2022/06/25/youth-pledge-to-promote-tobacco-free-pakistan/>

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/968947-youth-pledge-to-promote-tobacco-free-pakistan>

<https://dunya.com.pk/index.php/city/multan/2022-06-27/2016755>

<https://www.urdupoint.com/daily/livenews/2022-06-24/news-3181046.html>