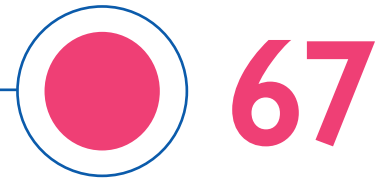


Iraq



Summary of Findings

1. INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Ministry of Health (MoH), the Tobacco Control Section (TCS), and the Supreme Committee for Smoking Control (SCSC) are responsible for setting and implementing public health policies related to tobacco control. The government does not accept, support, or endorse any policies or legislation developed in partnership with the tobacco industry (TI). The MoH is the only authorized organization to propose legislation related to tobacco control.

The Central Organization for Standardization and Quality Control (COSQC) allows representatives from the Cigarette Importers Association to attend meetings to set Iraqi standards related to imported or manufactured tobacco products despite objections from the Ministry of Health. These representatives have voting rights, and are allowed to participate in the decision-making process. The extent of influence exerted by private tobacco importing companies on tobacco control policies in Iraq remains unclear due to a lack of evidence. However, there are indications that these companies are hindering the issuance of an amendment to the Law on Combating the Harms of Tobacco, which has been under discussion with the government offices for the past three years.

The government delegation to the Conference of the Parties (COP) or any of its related meetings does not include any representative from the TI.

2. INDUSTRY CSR ACTIVITIES

The government agencies or its officials do not endorse any corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities from the TI.

3. BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY

The proposed new tobacco control law addresses the gaps in the old law and has been submitted by the Ministry of Health to Parliament since 2016. However it remains in limbo in the corridors of government, and the House of Representatives. This delay is a concern, as there are parties that appear to be delaying its approval. There is no conclusive evidence from the public domain or websites of the government or the House of Representatives that the TI is behind the obstruction of the new draft law. But the TI appears to be the only beneficiary of this delay.

The government provides various financial and logistical support to the national tobacco and cigarette industry, including tax exemptions, customs waivers, and financial facilities. Private tobacco importers also benefit from relatively low taxes on tobacco imports.

The Council of Ministers has approved a four-year extension of the additional 100% customs duty on imported cigarettes. The decision was made to protect the local industry which has been struggling to compete with cheaper imported cigarettes. The additional customs duty will make imported cigarettes more expensive and is expected to boost sales of locally produced cigarettes. The government hopes this will help to create jobs and stimulate the economy.

4. UNNECESSARY INTERACTION

On March 8, 2023 the Iraqi Minister of Industry and Minerals visited the Baghdad tobacco factory where he held a meeting with the chairmen of the company, and further directed them to continue to take measures and make efforts to increase the capital of the companies so that they can borrow and secure the necessary liquidity to



develop and add modern and advanced production lines. He also reviewed all partnership contracts concluded and emphasized the support of the private sector, a serious and efficient partner.

The government's decision to grant the Baghdad tobacco factory in partnership with a Belgian company DS represents the clearest collaboration yet between the government and the TI. DS has obtained international trademark rights for its products, such as Mazaya, LD, and Ealance, with the approval of the Ministry of Industry and Minerals.

The government's commitment to tobacco control is unclear. This raises concerns about the level of influence that the TI may have on tobacco control policies in Iraq.

5. TRANSPARENCY

The government's relationship with the TI is not subject to any specific laws that require it to be transparent. As a result, any meetings or interactions between the two parties are not publicly disclosed, even if they are necessary for the government to regulate the industry. This lack of transparency raises concerns about the potential for the TI to influence government policy in its favor.

The Iraqi government does not have any rules in place that require TI entities, affiliated organizations, or individuals acting on their behalf to disclose or register their activities. This lack of transparency makes it difficult to track the influence of the TI on government policy and to hold the industry accountable for its actions.

The Supreme Committee for SCSC, which is under the MoH, does not have the authority to register TI entities or individuals, nor to require them to disclose their activities. Tobacco companies are free to lobby government officials and to influence them without being held accountable for their actions. This lack of transparency is a major obstacle to tobacco control efforts in Iraq.

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no laws in Iraq that prohibit contributions from the TI or any entity working to further its interests. There is also no requirement for disclosure of such contributions. This lack of regulation allows the TI to exert undue influence on government policy and to undermine tobacco control efforts.

The government fully supports Baghdad tobacco factories that are owned by the Ministry of Industry and operated by the private sector through investment.

There is no publicly available information on the extent of TI contributions to Iraqi politicians or government officials. However, there is evidence that the TI has made significant contributions to political campaigns and has lobbied government officials on behalf of its interests.

7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

The Iraqi government's relationship with the TI is not transparent or accountable. The government does not require tobacco companies to disclose information on their activities, including expenses such as philanthropy and other activities. Additionally, the government does not have a program to consistently raise awareness on Article 5.3, which prohibits tobacco companies from contributing to political campaigns or providing gifts to government officials.

This lack of transparency and accountability allows the tobacco industry to exert undue influence on government policy and to undermine tobacco control efforts. The TI is able to use its financial resources to lobby government officials and to influence government policy in its favor. This is a serious public health concern, as tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Iraq.



Recommendations

1. Increase transparency and accountability in the government's relationship and interaction with the TI by requiring tobacco companies to disclose information on their activities, including expenses such as philanthropy and lobbying.
2. Strengthen the present tobacco control laws. This could include strict implementation of increasing taxes on tobacco products, banning smoking in public places, and prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors. Also, the Ministry of health should work promptly to support the parliament to approve the new tobacco law.
3. The Iraqi government must create a plan to combat illicit trade in tobacco products in coordination with neighboring countries and ratify the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.
4. The government should limit the benefits, grants or privileges to Baghdad Tobacco Company; it must be treated like any other tobacco company.
5. The government should have a national registry for all tobacco traders, their representatives, affiliated organizations, and individuals acting on their behalf.
6. Create a national tobacco control plan and outline the government's goals for reducing tobacco use and the strategies that it will use to achieve these goals.
7. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of tobacco control measures. This will help the government identify what is working and what is not, and make necessary adjustments to its tobacco control policies. Additionally, the government should create a program to consistently raise awareness on Article 5.3, which prohibits tobacco companies from contributing to political campaigns or providing gifts to government officials.