



## **Protecting youth from industry manipulation and preventing them from tobacco and nicotine use: World No Tobacco Day 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020**

The World No Tobacco Day is celebrated on 31st of May every year since its initiation in 1987 by the World Health Organization (WHO), in order to draw the attention of the world to the tobacco pandemic killing an estimated 8 Million people annually. This year The World No Tobacco Day focuses on “Protecting youth from industry manipulation and preventing them from tobacco and nicotine use”, as youth is a main target of the tobacco industry in marketing their products.

Sri Lanka ratified the WHO's Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2003, being the first in the region to do so. Article 13 (Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship) and 16 (Sales to and by Minors) of FCTC recommend measures to ban all types of tobacco advertising, promotions and sponsorships and restrict the sale of tobacco products to children. National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA) Act prohibits all forms of tobacco advertisements, promotion and sponsorship and prohibits selling tobacco products to anyone under 21 years old.

Tobacco kills half of its consumers prematurely, numerically around 20,000 a year in Sri Lanka and more than 8 million worldwide each year. The tobacco industry needs to recruit more and more new users to ensure their existence and sustenance as a profit making business venture. The plethora of evidence revealed that the industry uses a wide range of tactics to attract the children and youth. These include direct and indirect advertising, sponsorships and a wide range of promotions, such as introduction of flavoured products, product placement in movies, teledramas and social media platforms and free distribution of cigarettes in social settings and events.

Centre for Combating Tobacco (CCT) is the tobacco observatory of Sri Lanka and the South Asia Region, established under the WHO FCTC Article 5.3 to monitor tobacco industry interference and activities (TIIA) influencing public health. The whole of Sri Lanka is now given the opportunity to become a part of our Community Driven Tobacco Surveillance System (CDTSS). The *TobaccoUnmasked HotSpots* mobile App and the Map of CDTSS enable you to report TIIA in any language you prefer. If you come across any such incidents including tobacco industry targeting youth via various tactics, you can report it to us directly via the *TU HotSpots* mobile App. The app is freely downloadable and is available in Sinhala, Tamil and English languages. In addition, you can inform directly to CCT via [tobaccounmasked@gmail.com](mailto:tobaccounmasked@gmail.com) email or, anonymously, on ‘Contact Us’ page of the [www.cct.lk](http://www.cct.lk) website, without revealing your identity.

The rich collection of information of TIIA in Sri Lanka and South Asia region through our investigative research and from the CDTSS reporting are detailed in our *TobaccoUnmasked* ([www.tobaccounmasked.lk](http://www.tobaccounmasked.lk)) and *TobaccoUnmaskedSouth.Asia* ([www.tobaccounmaskedsouth.asia](http://www.tobaccounmaskedsouth.asia)) information portals for your easy reference and dissemination. CCT, together with its regional tobacco observatory network South Asian Regional Consortium Centre for Combating Tobacco (SARC-CCT), has organised an international webinar series in collaboration with The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union). This webinar series is organised to commemorate the WNTD 2020 to #ExposeTobacco industry tactics in the region targeting youth and also to share experiences and success stories related to countering such tactics. The schedules of the webinar series is attached here in the hope that you all will join us and build your skills. Then, you can take more effective action on your own, as well as join hands with us to combat tobacco in Sri Lanka and the Region, and to protect the young generation from tobacco and its harm.

CCT Team  
31<sup>st</sup> May 2020