

**THR Malawi and St. John of God Rehabilitation Centre Information Sharing
Meeting in Mzuzu.**

Activity Report

**Prepared by
Chimwemwe Ngoma**

February, 2020.

Contents

Introduction	3
Activities and achievements	3
Annex 1: Links to presentation, event photos and media interview	5
Annex 2: Programme of the event	6
Annex 3: List of participants	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1. Introduction

As part of tobacco harm reduction capacity building activities, three scholars; Chimwemwe, Alice and Wilfred partnered to build capacity of health professionals at St. John of God Rehabilitation Centre (SJOG) in Mzuzu, Malawi. The event was organised under the theme “*Informed population; Better choices; Healthier lives*”. And the slogan used was “*quit or die is no longer the only option*”. The event was an information sharing meeting with twelve staff members at SJOG; two clinicians, seven nurses, two councilors and one health worker.

Following personal introductions and sharing of expectations, THR Malawi and SJOG both provided briefs about their work. SJOG is a mental health facility, as part of their work, they provide smoking cessation services to individuals who are struggling with the habit of smoking. The Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction report copies and the Global Forum on Nicotine 2020 leaflets were also shared with the participants.

2. Activities and achievements

2.1 “What is tobacco harm reduction?” presentation.

The presentation was done by Wilfred to provide the participants with background information on the Tobacco Harm Reduction (THR) concept and introduce safer nicotine products like snus, heat not burn and electronic cigarettes. Two electronic cigarettes were displayed to help the participants appreciate what the devices look like and how they work. This was concluded by screening of the Public Health England TV documentary: *Smokefree ‘Health Harms’ – Impact of smoking vs vaping demonstration*. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RisBe5sLGpc&t=9s>)

2.2 Quitting and Switching to Safer Alternatives.

This was an open discussion which aimed to learn from the staff at SJOG on how they help their clients quit smoking, the institution employs both counselling and nicotine replacement therapies in form of nicotine patches and nicotine gum, it was mentioned that some clients complain about the taste of nicotine gum and that it suppresses their appetite for food. It was noted that some clients also relapse smoking because the nicotine replacement therapies available at the institution have a number of noticeable drawbacks. In this case, it was established that personal will power and commitment are the underlining available factors that determine whether one quits or relapses.

The column came to a consensus that introducing smokers to safer nicotine alternatives like electronic cigarettes could be an effective option to help them switch from smoking, consume nicotine in a much safer way and could help them not to relapse.

2.3 THR challenges in Malawi and the way forward.

A discussion on THR challenges in Malawi centered on accessibility and affordability of the safer nicotine products and limited access to accurate information on THR. The column proposed that innovators can help to bail out an average tobacco smoker living in a rural

area by coming up with an effective safer nicotine product that can suit the local economic and cultural environment. On top of that, it was also suggested that booking an appointment and making a presentation to the tobacco companies available in the country on safer alternatives and why we need them could make them appreciate the new market demand and adopt or invent modern technologies that would be suitable in Malawian context.

The column also observed that whilst electronic cigarettes are available in Malawi and some people can afford them, pushing further the awareness on THR and safer nicotine products could help in having many smokers know about the products thereby increasing the demand, with time, the role of demand and supply could apply leading to ease accessibility and cheaper prices.

2.4 Information on Knowledge Action Change scholarships and NSP mailing list.

The participants were introduced to Knowledge Action Change (KAC) scholarships and its timeline for application, they were all encouraged to apply when the call is open for applications into the next cohort, possibly towards the end of the year. They were also introduced Nicotine Science and Policy mailing list which they all expressed interest to be subscribers.

2.5 Media coverage.

There was one local media outlet, Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS) who assigned their reporter and camera person. Two news stories were aired, one on ZBS radio and the other one on ZBS television.

Annex 1: Links to presentation and event photos

- What is tobacco harm reduction? A presentation by Wilfred:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/anoqo5ye65siuog/What%20is%20tobacco%20harm%20reduction%20presentation.pptx?dl=0>
- Event photos:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/h2l5cwy6r0vcdh3/AADHzhsxWw3XXOtxVOivxM55a?dl=0>

Annex 2: Programme of the event

Informed Population; Better Choices; Healthier Lives

7 February, 2020 // St. John of God Rehabilitation		
9:30	Participants' registration Coffee Distribution of information and educational materials.	All participants
10:00	Setting the scene, introductions and sharing expectations.	Sahan
10:15	What is tobacco harm reduction? Presentation	Wilfred
10:30	Screening of the Public Health England TV documentary: <i>Smokefree 'Health Harms' – Impact of smoking vs vaping demonstration.</i>	Chimwemwe
10:35	Quitting and Switching to Safer Nicotine Products. Discussion	All Rapporteur: Patrick
11:10	THR challenges in Malawi, way forward and next steps. Discussion	All Rapporteur: Alice
11:45	KAC scholarships and other funding opportunities Closing	Chimwemwe
12:00	Group photos, Lunch and Networking	
13:00	End of the programme	

'Quit or die' is no longer the only option for smokers.

