Report

Reducing the harmful use of alcohol: progress made and the road to 2030

November 2019 – September 2023

In association with the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking

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Executive summary

15 international multi-stakeholder dialogues

In partnership with the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD), a series of 15 Wilton Park dialogues convened 171 multi-sectoral stakeholders to identify ways to take collective action to reduce the harmful use of alcohol across the globe. Framed by the 2018 UN Political Declaration on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) that presented a clear challenge to the alcohol industry to take action, and were expanded upon in the WHO Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022-2030, the dialogues took place between February 2019 and September 2023.

Participants from across the world representing governments, civil society organisations, development partners, academia and the private sector helped to identify solutions to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. This report summarises some key points and outcomes from the dialogues, recognising that specific regional and country contexts vary and cannot be covered in detail.

Collaboration to seek common ground

Throughout the meetings, participants across countries, regions and sectors expressed the desire to work collaboratively towards locally-engaged solutions and implementable actions. Acknowledging from the outset the position of caution that many stakeholders take in relation to alcohol industry economic operators, participants nevertheless pledged to seek common ground where progress could be made, and sought to focus on understanding the different contributions of all players towards reducing the harmful use of alcohol. Discussions in this space were candid and nuanced with participants respectfully expressing different and often opposing perspectives.

Key thematic areas and industry responses

Through dialogue on key themes, IARD gathered meaningful input from multiple stakeholders to inform the content of a range of outputs including standards, principles and guidelines to stimulate industry action. While this is progress, much more remains to be done, and participants identified areas for future action.

Theme 1: A whole-of-society approach is essential for meaningful impact on alcohol-related harms. Participants across all meetings interpreted whole-of-society as all stakeholders in the alcohol ecosystem including producers, retailers, advertisers, distributors and deliverers, and a range of other actors including government, academia, mainstream media, social media platforms, civil society, communities and consumers who are affected.

A holistic and integrated whole-of-government approach is required for effective regulation and enforcement. This includes engagement and coordination across sectors of public

health, finance, social welfare, police and justice, economic and community development, education and transport. Community, country, regional and global levels must be included.

Industry response: In 2019, the global CEOs of IARD member companies adopted a set of guiding principles (see page 3) for future actions to reduce harmful drinking. Feedback from stakeholders convened by Wilton Park was also instrumental to IARD's Labelling commitments in May 2021, to improve consumer information and warnings on product labels around age, driving, pregnancy, calories and alcohol content.

In January 2020 IARD developed Actions to accelerate reduction in underage drinking, and strengthened its partnerships with digital platforms including Meta (previously Facebook), YouTube, Google and Snapchat. Actions included introducing greater controls for influencers to age-gate posts and profiles; allowing users to opt out of alcohol advertising and to not advertise alcohol on family-suitable content; and creating more robust age controls.

Theme 2: The COVID-19 pandemic affected alcohol use in several key ways with the acceleration of e-commerce and digital marketing, and disruption of trading in hospitality venues, leading to new patterns of drinking at home, drinking alone, and in some cases drinking more to cope with stress. The new situation however led positively to increased awareness and public discussion of mental health issues, creating opportunities for discussing the harmful use of alcohol and its impact on mental health. It also revealed that imposing 'dry laws' or prohibitions did not lead to overall positive gains, with a growth in illicit and sometimes dangerous alcohol.

Industry response: The pandemic accelerated industry action that was already underway, especially in the areas of e-commerce and digital marketing.

Theme 3: Effective regulatory frameworks and enforcement are critical to reduce harmful drinking, particularly in the areas of alcohol marketing and advertising, and sales and delivery. Participants held challenging conversations about the merits or otherwise of self-regulation, co-regulation and formal regulation of industry. To some, self-regulation alone was seen as insufficient, while others, including industry, argued that co-regulation (i.e. acting in accordance with and building on government regulation) is both a positive standard-setter for the whole-of-industry and a sustainable business model, and that co-regulation can be an entry point for formal regulation. Some companies produce legally binding contracts with marketing agencies requiring them to abide by codes of practice surrounding the responsible promotion of alcohol (i.e. not to minors, and not associating alcohol with sexual success). Unrecorded and traditional alcohol consumption complicates the picture of regulation, particularly in some parts of the world where this is highly prevalent.

While participants held differing views on the appropriate levels of regulation, some argued that the alcohol industry is in a unique position to use its resources, reach and influence to support action to reduce harmful drinking. The UN, multilateral agencies, and governments can leverage this by issuing specific challenges to the industry to take action, and the industry can respond accordingly. (For example, the challenge set forth in the 2018 UN Political Declaration on NCDs.)

Industry response: IARD member companies partnered with 14 (now more than 20) prominent global and regional online retailers and e-commerce and delivery platforms to develop and enhance safeguards to prevent the online sale and delivery of alcohol to minors and reduce harmful drinking among adults, and produced the Global standards for e-commerce. To support the implementation of the global standards, IARD developed Frontline delivery agent training, translated into a number of languages. In September 2021, IARD developed Global standards to ensure responsible marketing of alcohol by social media influencers including Influencer guiding principles (IGPs).

Theme 4: Improving and sharing data and information to reduce the harmful use of alcohol is a response to a challenge in the WHO Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022-2030, asking industry to make more data available to inform effective responses and initiatives to

inform public health research and actions to reduce harmful use of alcohol. This means ensuring quality, robust and transparent data is available to public health researchers and advocates aiming to support the reduction of the harmful use of alcohol through evidence-based interventions. Data sharing can increase opportunities for collaboration and building consensus among multiple stakeholders. Other data gaps, including at country level, also exist and must be addressed. Alcohol industry actors expressed concern about financing research, citing actual or perceived conflict of interest as too high a risk.

Industry response: IARD developed an open access Data Sharing Portal bringing available data, including evaluation of industry action, into one place in the public domain. It also signposts any market research data that is conducted without conflict of interest.

Looking to the future

The series demonstrated a need for multi-stakeholder, multi-sector and multi-country exchange and dialogue that accommodates different positions and interests, finds common ground and leads to concrete action. While progress has been made, there is still more action needed at all levels to reduce the harmful use of alcohol.

The series provided an opportunity to identify a new challenge to the alcohol industry and define further action in forthcoming global statements such as the possible 2025 Political Declaration from the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs. In particular, as well as a continued focus on steps to eliminate alcohol sales and marketing to minors, there should be a concentrated focus on the areas of tackling heavy-episodic (or binge) drinking, and chronic-heavy drinking. IARD is open to future working with wider and multiple stakeholders to convene, facilitate, and share data in order to make further progress.

Summary of outputs of Wilton Park dialogues

The dialogues provided a space in which IARD was able to gather meaningful input from multiple stakeholders globally to inform content for standards, principles and guidelines to stimulate industry action.

IARD CEOs guiding principles to inform future actions

In 2019, the global CEOs of IARD member companies adopted a set of guiding principles for future actions to reduce harmful drinking. These were directly informed by lessons from the first three regional Wilton Park dialogues and guided the development of the global standards set out later.

1) Harms focused: promote consumer messages that demonstrate consequences of, and actively discourage, harmful drinking, not just about how to drink responsibly.
2) Community led: engage and listen to the community first and include them throughout. Utilize in-community assessments to identify social norms and determine appropriate interventions.
3) Evidence based: promote evidence-based and recognized tools to reduce harmful drinking.
4) Partnership: align and partner with the widest breadth of local public, private, and civil society stakeholders. Increase widespread adoption of these guiding principles, through IARD leadership.
5) Unique contribution: harness innovations and technology unique to the sector. Publicly share data on the reach and impact of interventions to tackle harmful drinking.

Developing actions to reduce the harmful use of alcohol

Wilton Park facilitated discussions among a broad group of stakeholders who have helped to shape and inform IARD actions to reduce harmful use, notably in the areas of:

- raising standards for online sales and delivery of alcohol

- raising standards in digital marketing
- increasing data sharing between industry, academia and public health.

To date, IARD has engaged over 35 global partners to embed and widen the implementation of its global standards, including some of the world's most prominent digital platforms, e-commerce retailers, and advertising agencies.

Global standards for online sale and delivery of alcohol (May 2021)

IARD member companies partnered with 14 (now more than 20) prominent global and regional online retailers and e-commerce and delivery platforms to develop and enhance safeguards to prevent the online sale and delivery of alcohol to minors and reduce harmful drinking among adults.

The Global standards for e-commerce include:

- enhancing safeguards and security measures that aim to prevent minors from being able to buy alcohol
- mechanisms to prevent alcohol being delivered to minors, to individuals showing visible signs of intoxication, or where prohibited by law
- providing tools, information, and education, or other support to drivers to empower them to deny delivery
- enhancing consumer information and control
- promoting global standards as a resource to support the development of national level codes and practices that build on local regulation.

To support the implementation of the global standards, IARD developed Frontline delivery agent training to help ensure alcohol is delivered responsibly. This is a free online tool that is available in several languages; it also supports delivery agents to refuse delivery in the following scenarios:

- where valid ID cannot be produced when age is in question
- where those of legal purchase age appear to be purchasing alcohol for minors
- where recipients are knowingly intoxicated.

Global standards to ensure responsible marketing of alcohol by social media influencers (September 2021)

To help prevent those under-age from seeing alcohol advertising on social media channels, IARD members, alongside global advertising, public relations and influencer agencies, collaborated to establish common standards relating to influencer and creator marketing. The principles cover the selection, engagement, and monitoring of influencers.

- Influencer guiding principles (IGPs)
- Influencer pledge
- Influencer how-to video (translated into several languages)

Data sharing portal (June 2023)

The WHO Global Alcohol Action Plan called for Economic Operators to share more data to inform public health research and actions to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. As part of its evolving response to this request, IARD has developed an open access Data Sharing Portal that collates publicly available literature that uses or includes industry data, as well as data series, analyses, and methodologies accessible from market research companies at a cost. The portal also contains resources such as guiding principles, considerations, and expectations to support data and information sharing.

Further information for consumers

Feedback from stakeholders convened by Wilton Park was also instrumental to IARD's Labelling commitments to improve consumer information.

Additional information on IARD standards is available here.

Context to the dialogues

Across the globe, over 3 million people die from alcohol- related deaths each year, accounting for 5.3% of all global deaths. In people aged 20–39 years, approximately 13.5% of total deaths are attributable to alcohol. Harmful use of alcohol consumption also contributes to the disabilities and poor health of millions of people. Overall, 5.1% of the global burden of disease and injury is attributable to alcohol, as measured in disability-adjusted life years (DALYs).

Disadvantaged and especially vulnerable populations have higher rates of alcohol-related death and hospitalization. There are also gender differences; the percentage of alcohol-attributable deaths among men amounts to 7.7 % of all global deaths compared to 2.6 % of all deaths among women. Overall, harmful use of alcohol is accountable for 7.1% and 2.2% of the global burden of disease for males and females respectively. [1]

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), with associated physical and neurological impairments, is a result of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. The global prevalence of FASD among children and youth in the general population was estimated to be 7.7 per 1000 population, and is highest in the European Region at 19.8 per 1000 population.[2] In addition, the harmful use of alcohol leads to increased levels of violence, gender-based violence, accidents and road accidents. It is a global problem that requires a global solution, with targeted regional, country and community level interventions and action.

In the majority of countries where comparable data is available, trends in underage drinking, drink driving, and heavy-episodic (or binge) drinking show a decline or have remained stable since 2010.[i] However, some countries are not seeing progress at all. The picture is complex because historical and current data gaps remain in many low- and middle-income countries.

Thematic areas

Throughout the series, participants explored several thematic areas to identify actions to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. These included: a whole-of-society approach to reducing the harmful use of alcohol; reducing the harmful use of alcohol in the time of COVID-19; effective regulatory actions to ensure responsible sale and delivery of alcohol; and sharing data and information to support reducing the harmful use of alcohol. Overcoming barriers to trust and collaboration among stakeholders also emerged as a strong recurrent theme during the dialogues.

Theme: Whole-of-society approach to reducing the harmful use of alcohol

Despite some reservations of engaging with the alcohol industry, participants from a wide range of backgrounds agreed that a whole-of-society approach is essential to have a meaningful impact on reducing alcohol-related harms. Such an approach means working with all interested and affected stakeholders, including new partners who are often not present.

All stakeholders in the alcohol ecosystem need to participate in identifying and

[1] WHO Alcohol Fact Sheet (2023)

[2] Global Prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Among Children and Youth: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis (2019)

implementing solutions. A whole-of-society approach needs to engage the whole supply chain including producers, retailers, advertisers, distributors and deliverers, and a range of other actors including government, academia, mainstream media, social media platforms, civil society, communities and consumers who are affected.

Addressing the harmful use of alcohol is not only the remit of the public health sector and a whole-of-government approach is required to support changes in consumer and industry behavior. Many other government sectors including finance, social welfare, police and justice, economic and community development, education and transport need to be engaged. A holistic, integrated, coordinated approach is necessary.

A whole-of-society approach also involves working at local, national, regional and global levels. Participants observed that there is often a lack of coordination and coherence between the different levels. For example, global guidelines and goals exist, but these have not been domesticated at a regional or national level. Similarly, national policies and programmes may be developed without adequate consultation with communities, and thus may miss critical pieces of the puzzle.

Although different regions and contexts require specific tailored interventions, as articulated in regional discussions across sub-Saharan Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Caribbean, Central and South America, participants identified common areas for taking action towards a whole-of-society approach. This was particularly the case across three areas of harm: drinking and driving, drinking during pregnancy and underage drinking. It was far more challenging to identify how best to reduce harm in the areas of heavy-episodic or heavy-drinking, and chronic-heavy drinking. However, these are key areas of action that need to be explored further among stakeholders, using data and evidence.

Theme: Reducing the harmful use of alcohol in the time of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic affected alcohol use in several key ways. The rapid acceleration of e-commerce opened up new patterns of drinking, including drinking alone, at home, and in some cases drinking more, to cope with the stresses and losses of the pandemic.

More positively, COVID-19 precipitated a seismic shift in openness, awareness and de-stigmatization of mental health issues. This created opportunities for more open discussions around the harmful use of alcohol, including both underlying mental health causes of harmful use, as well as the mental health consequences for the individual and the family.

A complicated landscape emerged regarding country experiences of alcohol use during lockdowns. Overall during the pandemic, the total volume of alcohol drinks sold decreased globally.[ii] In many countries, the data showed moderate drinkers consumed less[iii], but heavy drinkers consumed more with alcohol-related deaths rising during this period.[iv]

During COVID-19, some countries banned alcohol completely or closed venues that sold alcohol. Examples from India and South Africa demonstrated that implementing a 'dry law' on alcohol to reduce COVID-19 contagion does not result in overall positive gains. In many cases, the law drove people to consume illegal and sometimes dangerous alcohol and when laws were lifted, people drank in public places, ignored social distancing measures, and risked COVID-19 infections. It is important to analyse and consider social, political and economic implications of actions to reduce the harmful use of alcohol.

Digital marketing and the use of influencers and social media to promote alcohol sales amplified during this period. This also presents new opportunities to promote positive health messages around alcohol consumption and can potentially give more control to the consumer over their marketing choices. For example, in 2018 IARD established partnerships with Meta (previously Facebook), SnapChat and YouTube and created a set of standards around digital marketing to prevent minors from seeing alcohol advertising online, and explored ways to give users options to avoid alcohol advertising.

As a result of Wilton Park dialogues in 2019, IARD worked with these companies to further strengthen these standards to stop minors from seeing alcohol advertising and allowing users to opt out of alcohol advertising completely.

The impact of COVID-19 and government responses to the pandemic has resulted in changes to alcohol policy and use patterns around the world. A renewed focus on public health in government, business, and the public may provide opportunities to renew the commitment to a whole-of-society approach in tackling the harmful use of alcohol. This could drive further engagement and challenges in the upcoming milestones for the 2025 UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs.

As a result of these dialogues, IARD agreed to look at the following possible actions:

1. Step up communication to consumers about risks of harmful drinking during COVID-19 and lockdowns: shift from promoting responsible drinking to actively communicating messaging around harm and be explicit about low-risk guidelines where they exist.

2. Accelerate standards on e-commerce, including better consumer information and explore, where possible, self-exclusion options for vulnerable consumers to opt-out of online advertising and marketing of alcohol

3. Utilise growth in new online commercial channels (including e-commerce) to promote low and no alcohol by volume (ABV) drinks and support growth in trends for health and wellbeing

4. Use digital marketing to support delivery of approved public health messages and harm reduction tools

5. Take stronger action on influencer marketing; contracts and commercial relationships should be terminated with any influencers that promote irresponsible drinking

6. Share more data and identify a space for where industry data can be accessed by other stakeholder groups

7. Monitor, evaluate and share the implementation of codes and standards to ensure they work 'in practice'; work with independent organisations to do this where possible.

Theme: Effective regulation and enforcement

Participants discussed how effective and enabling regulation and enforcement to reduce the harmful use of alcohol is critical, but differed on how to approach it. Participants held challenging conversations about the merits or otherwise of self-regulation, co-regulation and formal regulation particularly in the areas of marketing and advertising, and sales and delivery. Unrecorded, illicit, and traditional alcohol consumption complicates the picture of regulation, particularly in some parts of the world where this is highly prevalent.

Regulatory and enforcement gaps

Regulation and enforcement of advertising and marketing of alcohol, sales, and drinking driving are inconsistent across the world. In many countries, laws remain absent or are not enforced.

Policy development around regulation can be effective when it involves civil society, academics and activists who can hold irresponsible actors to account for their actions.

To some, self-regulation alone was seen as insufficient, while others, including industry, argued that co-regulation (i.e. acting in accordance with and building on government regulation) is both a positive standard-setter for the whole-of-industry and a sustainable business model, and that co-regulation can be an entry point for formal regulation.

From a business perspective, regulation will often be developed according to the worst practitioners and so there is an impetus to raise standards across the whole industry, and

a balance must be struck between what shareholders want, and operating a sustainable business.

Regulation for advertising and marketing

A range of stakeholders held important discussions across multiple meetings to find ways to shape and strengthen safeguards for responsible digital marketing, including influencer marketing, which can cross borders and evade regulation. Conversations focused on how to protect certain groups of vulnerable people including minors, pregnant women, and abstaining or non-drinking communities.

Digital marketing has grown rapidly in recent years, and while some stakeholders saw this as a threat to public health, others saw it as an opportunity to promote public health messages and responsible drinking advice.

During the discussions, the development of international standards for digital marketing was underway. Some companies produce legally binding contracts with marketing agencies requiring them to abide by codes of practice surrounding the responsible promotion of alcohol (i.e. not to minors, and not associating alcohol with sexual success).

As drinking alcohol is often a social activity, some described it as also being 'socially regulated'. Marketing also has a great power to shape human behaviour, and is therefore also critical in regulating behavior and creating positive social norms around the responsible use of alcohol.

In January 2020 IARD developed Actions to accelerate reduction in underage drinking. Throughout 2020 IARD built on existing partnerships with digital platforms including Meta (previously Facebook), YouTube, and Snapchat to support for example greater controls for influencers to age-gate posts and profiles; allow users to opt out of alcohol advertising and not advertise alcohol on family-suitable content; and create more robust age controls. In September 2021, IARD published Influencer Guiding Principles to encourage responsibility by social influencers in alcohol marketing.

However, caution was expressed as while principles, standards and partnerships are welcome, the digital landscape is fast-paced and there is no control over consumers individually promoting alcohol through their social media accounts and reaching vulnerable populations. In addition, it can be difficult to engage influencers to act responsibly, especially those who are outside of IARD's member companies. It was hoped that the principles would stimulate a social norm to which influencers conform.

Three specific Wilton Park dialogues focused on accelerating the development and refinement of digital marketing standards for alcohol, and two dialogues explored the development of influencer guiding principles.

Regulation for sales and delivery

COVID-19 resulted in a massive disruption of 'on-trade' hospitality venues and transfer to 'off-trade' purchasing. Industry stakeholders argued that, in the past, producers have found it easier to build partnerships and set standards with advertising agencies, digital platforms and e-commerce retailers. Traditional retailers are much harder to engage. One particular challenge in the area of e-commerce was the last mile of delivery. For example, how do you incentivise delivery agents on a low wage to do the right thing and not deliver alcohol to underage or inebriated people?

With the fast-pace of change in the area of alcohol sales and delivery (especially online), governments have sometimes found it difficult to regulate and enforce positive action. IARD training tools and incentives have supported this, ensuring that systems are strong enough to support the driver to make the right decision such as Frontline delivery agent training in several languages.

Three specific Wilton Park dialogues focused on E-commerce standards to stress-test and co-create IARD standards.

Illegal, informal or traditional alcohol use

Illegal or informal alcohol sales are 25% of the overall alcohol market on average globally, and in some countries it is as much as 60%.[v]

The unregulated alcohol market – illegal, informal, and traditional alcohol production and use – is outside of government regulation and control, and as an informal sector, is impossible to tax. It is a complex and varied market. Illegal or illicit alcohol can contain toxic ingredients and be harmful to health or threaten life and is also a big driver of crime. Informal or traditional production of alcohol is widespread in many low and middle-income countries and is an accepted and longstanding part of culture and society.[vi]

For example, in many parts of Africa, it is commonplace for women to run informal drinking establishments, selling traditional brew made from local crops. While acknowledging that excessive drinking can cause a range of harms, these women rely on this income for their families' survival in the absence of other types of employment. Understanding this context with sensitivity is important for addressing the harmful use of alcohol, and support can be given to local producers to increase safety and improve standards.

Community engagement and participation in identifying and solving problems is key, as culture and society play a huge role in maintaining or changing concepts, values and practices around the use of alcohol, particularly when alcohol use is informal.

Alcohol use and impact of harmful drinking also depends on the social determinants of health such as poverty, unemployment, housing, family and community structures and these social determinants should also be considered when taking decisions and action.

Theme: Sharing data and information to support reducing the harmful use of alcohol.

In response to the challenge set forth in the WHO Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022-2030, three Wilton Park dialogues focused on data-sharing to explore what data is required by public health researchers, what data the industry can share, and the alignment of principles for sharing data that is robust, transparent and objective.

For effective action and interventions, all stakeholders need reliable and accurate data, and public health stakeholders need access to industry data. Strong demand exists for information, evidence and evaluations of industry interventions to reduce harmful drinking, and a data gap exists in relation to women and young people.

However, data alone is insufficient and a nexus of events and evidence must occur before policies change. Communities are legitimate stakeholders in this agenda and must contribute. Recognising the two ends of the spectrum of policy making and community action is key to building trust to find common solutions to reducing the harmful use of alcohol.

Alcohol industry stakeholders were strongly of the opinion that they should not fund research on alcohol and health, due to perceived conflict of interest. However, further discussions are urgently needed about sustainable, transparent, and ethical funding mechanisms that could support researchers to conduct independent evaluations on industry's and others' actions to reduce harmful drinking.

How can industry work alongside others to make progress?

During the final meeting of the series in September 2023 in New York, participants identified key ways in which the alcohol industry and other stakeholders can work together more effectively to reduce the harmful use of alcohol. These included:

1. Build trust and collaboration among a wider group of partners: find specific areas of agreement between multiple stakeholders and work together to innovate, evaluate, and learn. Leave bias behind when you enter dialogues and rely on evidence.

2. Common ground among stakeholders, including industry and public health actors, can be found in the specific area of harm reduction, and this should be the focus as we move forward. Industry should be pragmatic and work with partners where there is common ground, even where there is not agreement on everything.

3. Guidelines for industry and non-industry actors should be developed to support collaborative working with clear boundaries about what can be discussed and achieved, and what is off limits.

4. Financing: there is a need for an independent model addressing the conflict of interest between financing and engagement, especially for data and evaluation of actions to reduce harm.

5. Improve documentation of interventions and outcomes, share knowledge and information about good practice and successful outcomes, disseminate learning, use storytelling, and scale up action.

6. The private sector has knowledge, tools and techniques, including on digital marketing, which can be applied to public health goals to reduce drink driving, underage drinking, and drinking in pregnancy. This can also be used to tackle the problems of heavy-episodic (or binge) drinking and chronic-heavy drinking.

7. Take partnerships, conversations and knowledge from the global level to the regional and country levels. Start dialogues in countries that define spaces in which to intervene collaboratively according to country contexts.

8. Expand and engage communities as key stakeholders and consumers, and co-design interventions with the community.

9. Take into account regional various and country contexts, particularly as alcohol e-commerce levels vary and are not relevant in some places. Policy solutions should be explored and tailored accordingly.

Key opportunities for 2025 and beyond

In 2025, the UN High-Level Meeting (HLM) on Noncommunicable Diseases is taking place in New York, and stakeholders present at the meeting acknowledged the opportunity that this presents to identify improved definition of action.

In particular going forward there should be a concentrated focus on the areas of tackling heavy-episodic (or binge) drinking, and chronic-heavy drinking.

Participants also identified other opportunities for engagement in global arenas such as during high profile sports events (e.g. the FIFA World Cup in USA), employing efforts to reach out to the public and also engage governments and the private sector in reducing the harmful use of alcohol.

In the area of data sharing, stakeholders requested a country informational portal that can be used for global reporting and accountability to identify how countries are performing (consumption, harm, and regulatory trends) and whether they have polices and procedures that encourage or discourage harmful drinking. Advocacy, community engagement, and programming messages can be developed on this basis.

Conclusion

Following this series of dialogues characterised by the candid sharing of opinion and experience by multiple stakeholders globally, the future looks promising for further collaboration on the ground. The series demonstrated a need for concrete action and the importance of exchanging differing views and perspectives. It also provided an opportunity

to identify improved definition of action in forthcoming global statements, for example, in a possible 2025 Political Declaration from the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs.

IARD has produced a suite of outputs to demonstrate industry commitment, and support better practice than before, and is open to future working with multiple stakeholders to convene, facilitate and share information in order to make further progress.

Though much work remains to be done, and more trust needs to be built among stakeholders, participants demonstrated that finding concrete areas of shared interest, no matter how small, is a way to make progress.

About the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD)

IARD is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to reducing harmful drinking and promoting understanding of responsible drinking. It is supported by leading global beer, wine and spirits producers, who have come together for a common purpose: to be part of the solution in combating harmful drinking. To advance this shared mission, IARD works and partners with the public sector, civil society, and private stakeholders.

Alison Dunn
Wilton Park | November 2023

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[i] IARD Trends Report: Measures of Harmful Drinking 2010-2021

[ii] IWSR, Are people really drinking more during the pandemic?

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[iv] USA; UK; Germany.

[v] https://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.A1022?lang=en

[vi] Alcohol in the Shadow Economy Unregulated, Untaxed, and Potentially Toxic (IARD 2018)