

MONITORING THE MEDIA CODE OF PRACTICE ON ALCOHOL ADVERTISEMENT IN SIERRA LEONE

Theme: Implementing Effective Alcohol Policies

By

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Outline

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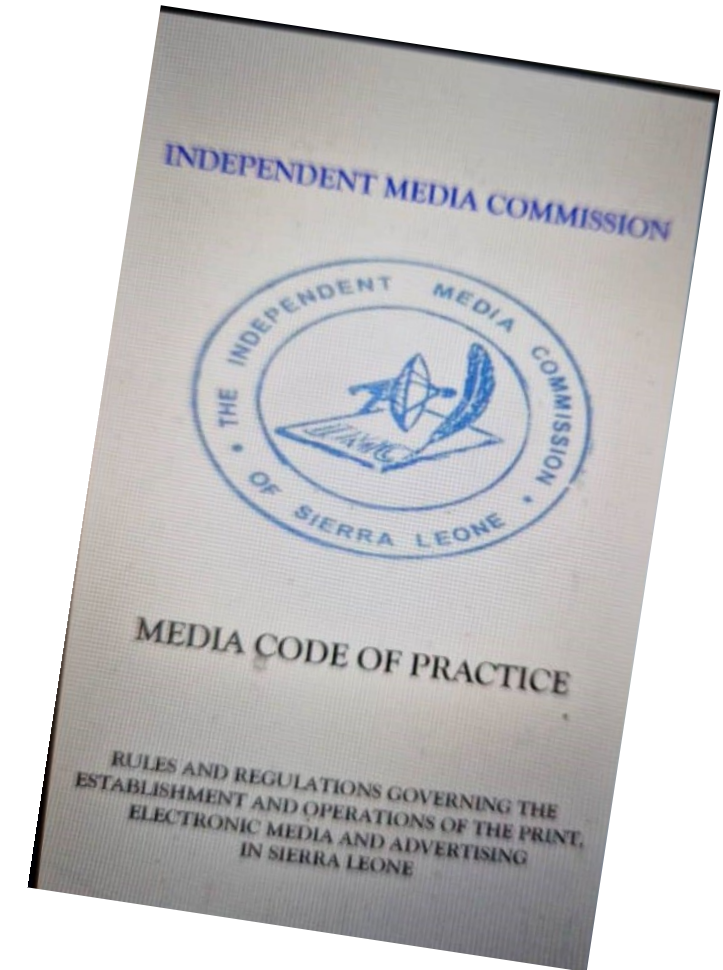
Background



- Sierra Leone has a youthful population, with 62.5 % under 25 years old.
- Research shows alcohol marketing accelerates initiation of drinking and increases alcohol consumption among underage drinkers, youth and women.
- The alcohol industry uses marketing techniques to create a culture that normalizes alcohol consumption.
- Ban and/or regulating alcohol advertising, is one of the WHO Best Buys & SAFER cost-effective measures that protect children, adolescents and abstainers for alcohol-related harms.

BACKGROUND

- The Independent Media Commission (IMC) Media Code of Practice Governing Radio/Television Stations Operating in Sierra Leone in (MCoP) was adopted in 2007.
- It regulates time of alcohol advertising on radio and television.
- No 7 of the MCoP states: Radio/television stations shall not broadcast before 11.00 p.m. each day, programs that are violent, pornographic or obscene in character or will tend to lead children below the age of 18 to crime and anti-social behavior, or portray smoking, drinking or illegal drug taking as a way of life.



Objectives



i. To determine level of awareness of media houses on alcohol marketing restrictions in the IMC MCoP.

ii. To determine whether media houses uphold the IMC MCoP on alcohol advertisements.

iii. To ascertain the effectiveness of monitoring and enforcing the IMC MCoP on alcohol advertisement.

METHODS:

- 8 out of the 37 nonreligious radio stations in the Western Area were purposively selected based on their national coverage, and all the 3 non-religious TV stations were monitored for alcohol advertising for 2 weeks, between 2nd and 17th December 2021.
- The Monitoring Alcohol Marketing: MARK - a tool for NGOs that FORUT (Campaign for Development and Solidarity) developed was used to record advertisement broadcast on target radio stations and TVs. <http://www.add-resources.org/monitoring-alcohol-marketing.5947842-315773.html>
- A Key Informant interview tool was developed and administered to staff of Independent Media commission and managers of the selected media houses.
- Desk review of the IMC MCoP was conducted.

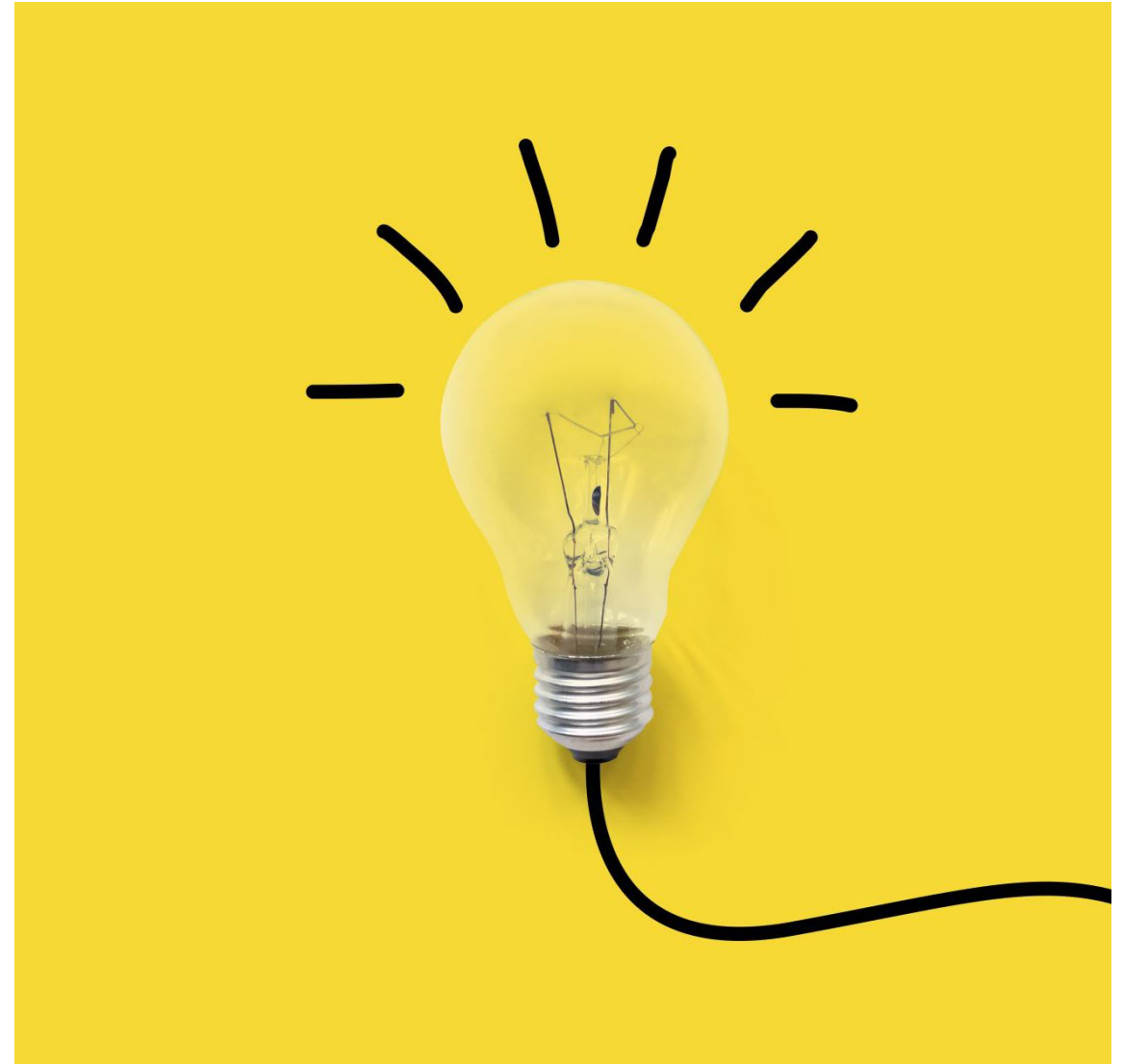
Limitations of the Study

- The study focused only on the time of broadcast, as stipulated in the MCoP, and not the contents of the advertisements that also need to be censored.
- Community radio stations, with limited coverage, were not targeted.
- The remaining 14 districts were not targeted, which may not reflect national compliance with MCoP.



RESULTS

- Staff of all the 8 radio stations and 3 TV stations were aware of the MCoP.
- All the media houses reported having internal guidelines on alcohol advertisement.
- One radio station does not advertise alcohol products at all.



RESULTS

- Only 1 out of the 3 TV stations broadcast an alcohol advertisement at 1:00pm, contravening the restrictions to broadcast only after 11pm.
- None of the 8 radio stations aired alcohol-related advertisement after 11pm during the two-week monitoring period. However, there were no documented schedules for airing alcohol and other advertisements in the 7 stations that air alcohol advertisements to ensure compliance with the restrictions of the MCoP.
- IMC reported monitoring compliance with the MCoP but did not provide any evidence of monitoring and enforcing sanctions
- No review of the MCoP had been conducted at the time of the study.

CONCLUSION

- With no operational mechanism to implement the MCoP and internal regulations on alcohol advertising, media houses are likely to broadcast alcohol advertisements before 11.00 p.m
- The weak monitoring and enforcement of the MCoP is likely to lead to more breaches of the MCoP.
- There is need to review the MCoP for more effective alcohol marketing counter measures to reduce children and youth exposure to alcohol.
- Including provisions that comprehensively restrict alcohol advertising in a new alcohol bill will strengthen compliance with the MCoP.

THE END

THANK YOU

