

Tobacco Industry: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Corporate Social Irresponsibility (CSI)?

Indeed, a well-planned, managed, and ethical corporate social responsibility has become a significant part of any business organizations apart from ensuring quality products and profits/wealth maximization. There are different schools of thoughts that perceive CSR from different point of views. Although, there is never ending debate regarding the existence of CRS in corporate world (profit driven CSR), it is fact that several business organizations across the globe practice CRS activities to uniquely position themselves in the society. However, it is scientifically proven that tobacco products are addictive, cause disease and death and give rise to a variety of social ills, including increased poverty¹. All sorts of tobacco products are lethal, although these products are legal. Hence, tobacco products, in terms of corporate social responsibility, cannot be compared or placed in the categories of other consumer products. As tobacco industry creates much harm in the society it can be considered as socially irresponsible industry.

Nepal signed the WHO FCTC on 3rd December 2003, ratified on 7th November 2006, and became a party to the WHO FCTC on February 5, 2007.²WHO FCTC article 5.3 recommends parties to protect public health policies from commercial and other vested interests of tobacco industry that have adverse impact on tobacco control laws. Furthermore, article 13 recommends for banning all sorts of tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship as well as other CSR related activities of tobacco industry.

On the basis of WHO FCTC guidelines, the government of Nepal formulated and passed tobacco control law in Nepal to regulate and reduce tobacco consumptions and to protect people's health. The Tobacco Product (Control and Regulatory) Act 2011 is the main law governing tobacco control in Nepal with mandatory 90% pictorial health warnings on all tobacco products, ban on sale of tobacco to minors and pregnant women, and complete TAPS ban. However, Surya Nepal Pvt. Ltd., a major tobacco industry in Nepal has been undermining the exiting tobacco control law through different tactics that range from sponsoring games to donating fund to government officials for combating COVID 19 to supplying tobacco products in the market with only 75% PHW etc.

Recently, Surya Nepal had offered Prof. Dr. Bhagawan Koirala and his team donation of 50 million rupees in the name of corporate social responsibility (CSR) for building Kathmandu Institute of Children's Hospital (KIOCH). On Friday, 23rd April 2021 the agreement was supposed to be signed by both parties. Meanwhile, Mr. Ananda Bahadur Chand (Chairperson of Action Nepal) led group of media and NGOs held a press meet to aware, warn, and build pressure on Prof. Dr. Koirala and his team to reject the donation as accepting donations from Tobacco Industry for building children's hospital would be completely against the tobacco control law. Six representatives from different NGOs and more than ten media persons participated in the meet.

Mr. Ananda Bahadur Chand, Chairperson, Action Nepal, said that people in Nepal idealize Prof. Dr. Koirala as public health promoter in Nepal and it was our misfortune that Prof. Koirala was accepting donation by tobacco industry for children's hospital. Prof. Koirala always supported us by joining hand together with us in advancing tobacco control in Nepal. All efforts

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and achievements so far made would go in vain. Still there is time. Please, step back, he requested to professor.

Mr. Shanta Lal Mulmi, Executive Director, RCPHC, denounced Prof. Dr. Koirala's intention to sign the agreement with Surya Nepal. The person who has always advocated for better public health, discouraged people to consume tobacco products, warned about the lethal effects of tobacco consumption through different means of media and social media is now supporting Tobacco Industry by accepting the donation for construction of children's hospital. This is ridiculous, he said.

Dr. Jaya Kumar Gurung, Executive Director, NDRI, informed that tobacco industries have been practicing different social activities and campaigns to clean their dirty image. The proposed donation to children's hospital was not other than promotional activity in the name of corporate social responsibility. Prof. Dr. Koirala should not accept the donation and sign the agreement any cost, he urged.

Likewise, **Rudra Kadiriya, Chairperson, Cancer Council Nepal, Khem Raj Joshi, Director, Nagarjun Development Committee, Ramnath Mainali, Chairperson, Cancer Society Nepal**, said that accepting donation from tobacco industry was not only against tobacco control law but also immoral and unethical as such irresponsible activities of tobacco industry should not be encouraged in the name of CSR. Hence, Prof. Dr. Koirala should reject to sign the agreement.

Eventually, due to increased pressure from health journalists and group of non- government organizations, Professor Dr. Bhagawan Koirala stepped back and cancelled the agreement to accept financial aid from tobacco industry. Thanks to health media journalists for playing key role in building pressure on Professor Koirala's team to shun financial support from Tobacco Industry.

Annually, tobacco kills around 27,137 people (accounted for 14.9 % of all deaths) in Nepal. The economic and health burden to the nation is enormous. At the time of COVID 19 pandemic, tobacco industry like Surya Nepal is trying to influence people and the government through its tactics e.g. financial contribution and donation in several areas in the name of corporate social responsibility undermining tobacco control law. Such types of interferences and socially irresponsible activities must be banned and panelized by the governing and regulatory institutions.

Reference

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ऐन अनुसार सुर्ती उद्योगको आर्थिक सहायता लिन नमिल्ने
हेल्थ टिभी अनलाइन (१० बैशाख २०७८, शुक्रबार 257 Views)
See more at: <https://healthtvonline.com/health-news/2021/04/35180/>
2. **बाल अस्पताल निर्माणका लागि चुरोट कम्पनीबाट ५ करोड सहयोग लिँदै डा. भगवान कोइराला**
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See more at: <https://deshsanchar.com/2021/04/23/500173/>
6. **डा कोइराला कार्यक्रममा गए तर लिएन चुरोट कम्पनीको सहयोग रकम**
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Health News Nepal: (by N Bhatta April 23, 2021 in News)
See more at: <https://healthnewsnepal.com/news/surya-nepal/>
9. **डा भगवान कोइरालाले चुरोट उत्पादक कम्पनीको सहयोग सम्झौता स्थगित गरे**
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10. **डा. कोइरालालाई अस्पताल निर्माणका लागि चुरोट कम्पनी सँग सहयोग लिन नैतिकताले दिन्छ?**
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11. **Exposed: Wolf in sheep's clothing - tobacco industry's green washing attempts thwarted**
See more at: <https://www.citizen-news.org/2021/04/exposed-wolf-in-sheeps-clothing-tobacco.html>
12. **अस्पताल बनाउन डा. कोइरालाले लिनलागेको सहयोग प्रति एन्टीटोबाको संस्थाको आपत्ति, सम्झौता रोकियो**
हेल्थपोस्ट /काठमाडौं (प्रकाशित २०७८ वैशाख १० गते १९:३९ 219Shares) See more
at: <https://www.healthpostnepal.com/2021/04/23/38847/>
13. **Nepal rejects attempts by tobacco industry to clean its dirty image :Tobacco kills 27,000 people every year in Nepal.**
Health News Nepal April 24, 2021 in **English**
See more at: <https://healthnewsnepal.com/english/tobacco-industry/>
14. **Call to shun financial assistance from tobacco factory**
By **Himalayan News Service** Published: 11:40 am Apr 25, 2021
See more at: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/call-to-shun-financial-assistance-from-tobacco-factory>

Published paper news:

THE HIMALAYAN TIMES, SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 2021

Call to shun financial assistance from tobacco factory

Himalayan News Service

Kathmandu, April 24

Six non-governmental organisations working against the use of tobacco products have expressed serious concern about the alleged plan of state-owned Kathmandu Institute of Child Health headed by Prof Bagawan Koirala to accept financial assistance equivalent to Rs 50 million from Surya Nepal Pvt Ltd, a cigarette factory, as part of the latter's corporate social responsibility.

The organisation raising voice against the acceptance of proposed financial assistance include Resource Centre for Primary Health Care, Nepal Development Research Institute, Cancer Council Nepal, Nagarjun Development Community, Cancer Society Nepal and Action Nepal.

Issuing a joint press release today, the organisations said that the move to accept financial assistance from a tobacco factory by a health facility on the pretext of Corporate Social Responsibility was in contravention of the prevailing laws.

According to the organisations, officials of public agencies are prohibited from accepting any assistance, participation or cooperation from tobacco industries in any activity or programme related to health facilities.

The Tobacco Product Control and Regulatory Directives, 2014 states that tobacco manufacturer and related parties are prohibited from providing any financial, technical, material, and structural assistance to educational seminaries, theatres, religious discourse, preaching or health facilities operated by the government, non-government or private sectors.

The organisations have called on the health facility led by Prof Koirala to refuse the financial assistance from the tobacco factory.

प्रेस विज्ञप्ती कार्यक्रममा उपस्थित विभिन्न संघ संस्थाका पदाधिकारी तथा सञ्चार कर्मीहरु:

Press meet
Carnival Baneshwor Kathmandu

Date: 04/23/2021

Attendance sheet

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Press meet – Photos

