

**Alcohol Control Policy in Thailand:
Think Globally
Act Nationally
Implement Locally**

Thomas Babor
University of Connecticut
School of Medicine
Farmington, CT, USA



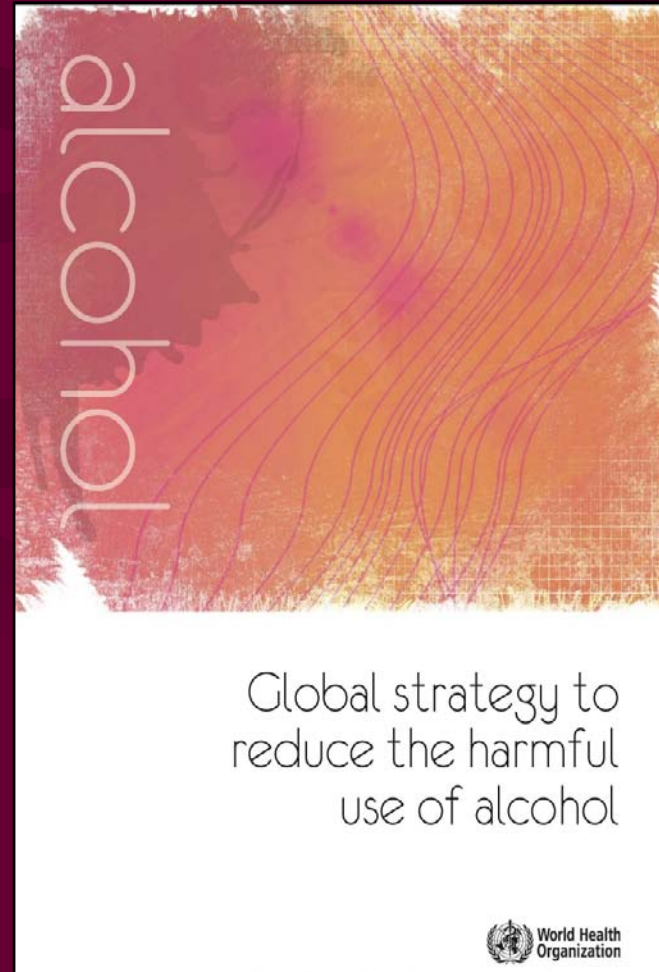
Think Globally

- Share knowledge (e.g., WHO Global Burden of Disease Project)
- Challenge International Trade Agreements that favor alcohol as an ordinary commodity
- Support an international code to ban irresponsible alcohol marketing
- Monitor multi-national alcohol industry
- Implement WHO Global Strategy

Think Globally:

WHO Global Strategy (2010)

- Developed through a long collaboration between the WHO Secretariat and Member States, including SEARO.
- All important stakeholders were consulted, including the industry and NGOs.
- Represents a unique consensus among WHO's 193 Member States on ways to tackle harmful use of alcohol



10 TARGET POLICY AREAS

- (a) leadership, awareness and commitment
- (b) health services' response
- (c) community action
- (d) drink–driving policies and countermeasures
- (e) availability of alcohol
- (f) marketing of alcoholic beverages
- (g) pricing policies
- (h) reducing the negative consequences of drinking and alcohol intoxication
- (i) reducing the public health impact of illicit alcohol and informally produced alcohol
- (j) monitoring and surveillance

Act Nationally: WHO Policy Areas Targeted in Thai National Strategy

- (a) leadership, awareness and commitment*
- (b) health services' response*
- (c) community action*
- (d) drink–driving policies and countermeasures*
- (e) availability of alcohol*
- (f) marketing of alcoholic beverages*
- (g) pricing policies*
- (h) reducing the negative consequences of drinking and alcohol intoxication*
- (i) reducing the public health impact of illicit alcohol and informally produced alcohol
- (j) monitoring and surveillance*

Implement Locally: The Triangle That Moved the Mountain

**Creation of
relevant knowledge**

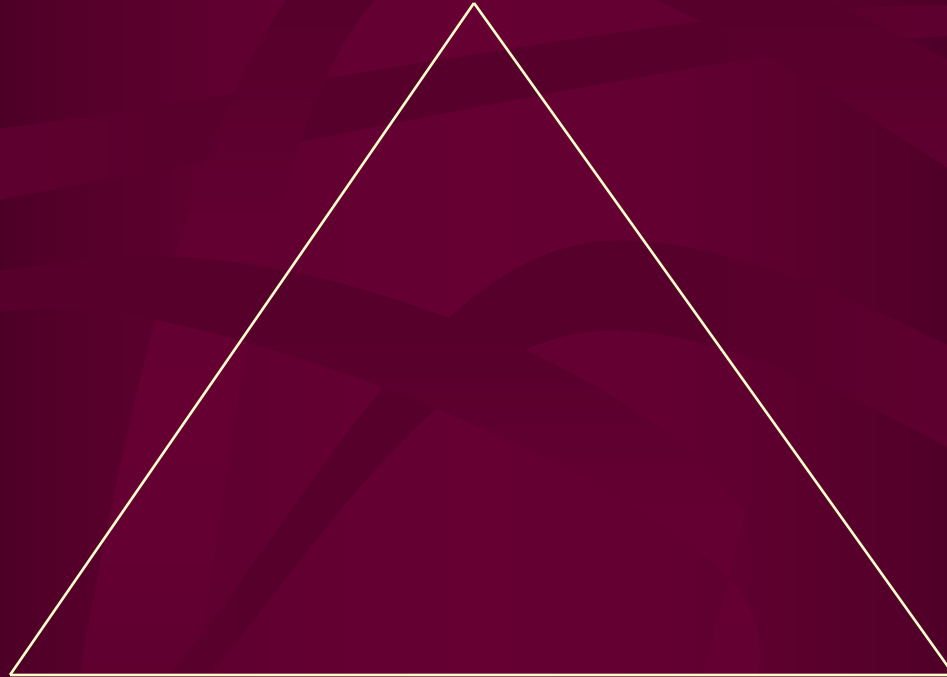


**Social
movements**

**Political
involvement**

Another Triangle That Can Move the Mountain

Modify the Agent:
Alcohol



Change the
Environment with
Effective Policies

Protect the Host:
Vulnerable
Populations

Scientific Evidence

How to create a safe environment for alcohol users and abstainers

Limit economic
availability

Alcohol taxes, price
controls

Limit physical
availability

Age restrictions, controls
on time, place, density

Social availability
constraints

Restrictions on drinking
context

Deterrence and social
pressure

Drink driving measures,
brief interventions,
treatment

Reduce psychological
attractiveness

Marketing restrictions

Protect the Host

- Focus on vulnerable populations: women, youth, alcoholics
- Public education through the mass media and person-to-person communications
- Educate youth in media literacy
- Create a system for treatment and early intervention

Modify the Agent: Alcohol

- Favor low alcohol content beverages
- Favor no alcohol content beverages
- Discourage product design that appeals to vulnerable populations (e.g., women, youth, alcoholics)

Control the vector: The alcohol beverage industry

- Monitor and regulate alcoholic beverage industry because it acts as a vector for the drinking environment and the host
- Restrict alcohol marketing
- Respect the public's natural tendency to abstain or use alcohol only infrequently
- Resist the intrusion of multi-national corporations into Thai culture

Research, networking and exchange of information

- Government, NGOs, religious groups, and academic institutions such as universities and research bodies should evaluate the effectiveness of alcohol control policies
- Establish local surveillance centres within academic bodies or health ministries to regularly monitor alcohol consumption and problem trends.
- Periodic review and update of all policies, programs and laws.

NEXT STEPS

- Disseminate National Strategy to all sectors of civil society
- Create a local network of national counterparts
- Disseminate information on alcohol policy and public health
- Build capacity for policy analysis and for interaction with the alcohol industry
- Technical cooperation with WHO and NGOs at country level
- Social marketing activities to build support

Could social marketing add momentum, reach and yield?

- Could media campaigns support evidence-based policy initiatives (“Are you drinking too much? Ask your doctor.”) and prevent drink-driving?
- Could counter-advertising give people a lifestyle alternative to alcohol use?
- Could health promotion be advanced through social marketing?

What's your message, Thai Health Promotion?

- *Don't drink, don't smoke, don't use drugs,
and don't have any fun*
- *or*
- *Substance-free lifestyle: pathway to health,
prosperity and happiness*

Conclusions

- Opportunities for effective, evidence-based alcohol policies are more available than ever to better serve the public good
- Alcohol is not an ordinary commodity, and must be treated as such
- Alcohol policies that limit access to alcoholic beverages, discourage driving under the influence of alcohol, reduce the attractiveness of alcoholic beverages, and increase the price of alcohol, are likely to reduce the harm linked to drinking
- Alcohol problems can be minimized or prevented using a coordinated, systematic policy response.

