

DRITHI NEWSLETTER

Issue 4: Aug-Oct 2024

DRITHI (Developing Research and Action Capacity in India To Counter Harm Industries) is a DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance Senior Fellowship awarded to Dr. Upendra Bhojani. Over the five years (2023-2028), our research aims to analyze the diverse trajectories of public policies related to tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and opium from historical and political economy perspectives. The study also aims to engage with and indigenise the concepts of 'commercial determinants of health' and to promote its integration into health and policy research institutions in India. This is the fourth quarterly newsletter from DRITHI, see the earlier issues [here](#).

Updates

DRITHI research protocol received approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee at IPH Bengaluru

The scoping review of literature is underway to map public policy shifts as well as major industrial evolution timepoints concerning the psychoactive substances of our interest since their industrial scale production in India. We are also sourcing and analyzing literature to understand the evolution of 'commercial determinants of health' concepts. This exercise is informed by "What's the Problem Represented to be" approach advocated by Carol Bacchi.

Anand Kumar, Research Officer with DRITHI presented a paper on initial findings after an in depth scoping review of DRITHI at the Institute of Public Health Symposium & Annual meet.



DRITHI team had an interaction with collaborators and mentors in september. Dr. Fran Baum, Dr. Anna Gilmore and Dr. C J Kuncheria joined the DRITHI team reflecting on the progress and future course of actions.



Achyutha N G, Research Manager for DRITHI with an invitation from the District Tobacco Control Cell, Shivamogga facilitated a day long training on Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) and tobacco vendor license for the members of the City Municipal Corporation, Shivamogga city.



Public engagement

DRITHI team organized a day-long 'storytelling' workshop by the eminent curator and story teller, Mr Vikram Sridhar at IPH Bengaluru for the IPH staff and associates. The DRITHI team put out an art exhibit, 'tobacco and society', a compilation of



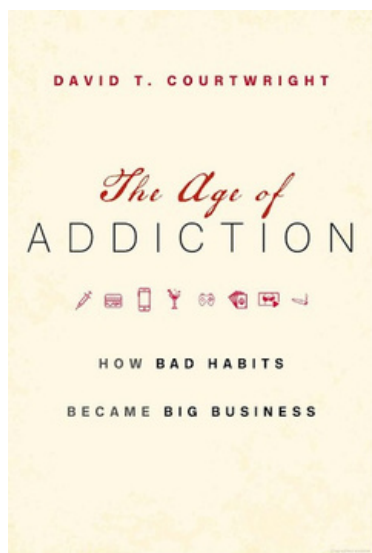
Research (Puducherry) and the Department of Public Health Dentistry at the Goa Dental College (Goa). Upendra Bhojani delivered talks on introducing CDOH to mental health professionals at the Sangath (Goa) and to the community and public health professionals through the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (Chandigarh). We also facilitated two-part structured sessions on CDOH for the Indian Climate and Health Resilience fellows.

pencil-on-paper drawings depicting socio-cultural and historical contexts of tobacco use and production in India at Chandigarh (PGIMER) and Goa (Sangath). The exhibit was also part of the first National Mental Health Festival (Mannotsava) organized in Bengaluru. The exhibit has also been installed at IPH offices in Bengaluru, Chamarajanagara and BR Hills.



Upendra served as a faculty in the 5th 'Public Health Policy and Management Program' teaching health policy to international participants from about 29 countries. The program was organized by the PGIMER Chandigarh with support from the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Upendra also served as a resource person for a Regional Consultations for Key Stakeholders on the National Tobacco Control Program (organized by the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control PGIMER in Goa) as well as for the National Consultation to modify the terminology to address "Endgame for Tobacco" as "Endgame for Nicotine" in India.

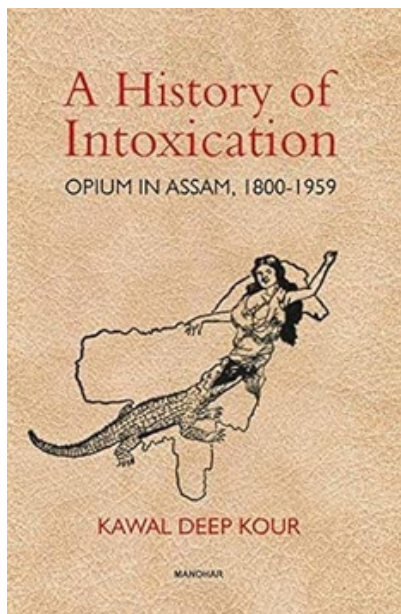
Featured Readings



Art Corner



David Courtwright reveals how global enterprises have both created and catered to our addictions. "The Age of Addiction" chronicles the triumph of what he calls "limbic capitalism," the growing network of competitive businesses targeting the brain pathways responsible for feeling, motivation, and long-term memory.



In "A History of Intoxication: Opium in Assam," Kawal Deep Kour examines the impact of imperial interests, national politics, and international drug diplomacy by shedding light on opium's multifaceted role in Assam's social and economic landscapes between 1800 and 1959.

This sketch is of a boy selling cigarettes on city streets in the Philippines. This is one more way in which young people become part of tobacco supply chains apart from their involvement in bidi rolling and on tobacco farms. It is not unusual to find children and young people selling or assisting others to sell tobacco products. At times, children are asked by adults to purchase tobacco products on their behalf from vendors. This makes them vulnerable to initiation into tobacco use. Tobacco use kills nearly half of its consumers prematurely. So, to recruit new consumers, the tobacco industry is known to target children and young people. The tobacco industry uses a variety of tactics to target young people including direct and indirect advertisements, flavored tobacco products, product placements, free samples and sponsored programs including talent competitions involving schools. In India, one in ten boys and one in thirteen girls use tobacco in some form. Laws in India prohibit sale of tobacco to and by minors as well as the sale of tobacco around educational institutions. It is illegal to advertise tobacco products. However, nearly three in four youth smoking tobacco are able to buy cigarettes or bidi from tobacco vendors. At least one in two youths sees tobacco advertisements somewhere or sees someone using tobacco on mass media. This sketch is based on a photograph by Wayne S. Grazio (CC license).

Publications

Goel, S., Walia, D., Bhojani, U., Bhatnagar, N., & Chopra, M. (2024). Is India on a path to reduce the tobacco industry's influence in tobacco control? Insights from the Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index (2019-2023). *Frontiers in Public Health*, 12, 1358834. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1358834>

Bassi, S., Chopra, M., Chugh, A., Das, S., Bhojani, U., Nazari, G. P., Amin, A., Dutta, J., Lal, P., Gupta, P. C., & Arora, M. (2024). Trends in Level of Implementation of the WHO FCTC Article 5.3 in India. *Tobacco Use Insights*, 17, 1179173X241271543. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1179173X241271543>

