

Authorities intensify fight against tobacco smoking

Resolution. The health officials and police say they will arrest smokers in the district as a way of enforcing the law.

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MUKONO. Mukono District authorities and police have embarked on a joint campaign to enforce the Tobacco Control Act.

Led by Dr Moses Mulyowa, the chairperson of the district private health service providers, the health officials say it would be a de-service to the country if they sit back and watch as Ugandans continue to die of diseases associated with tobacco smoking.

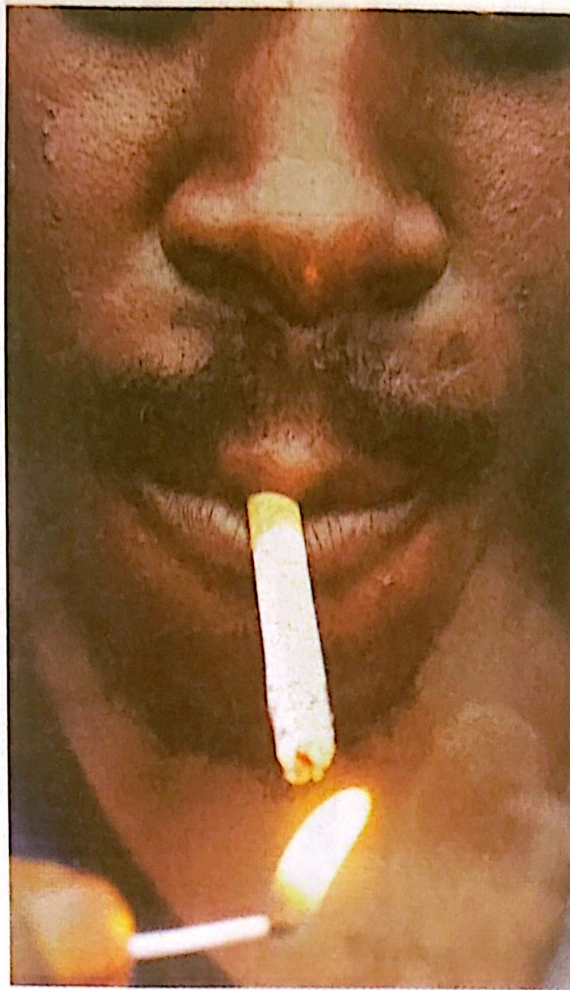
"Since we are in the health field, we know the dangers associated with smoking and we will work with our colleagues in the police to enforce the law," Dr Mulyowa said during a recent interview with *Daily Monitor*.

He added: "We believe that if we join hands with police and talk to the people involved in smoking tobacco, it will yield some positive results."

The health officials and Uganda National Health Consumers' Organisation together with police have resolved to arrest whoever will be found smoking on sight.

In one of their recent operations, the district environment police officers pounced on revellers in some bars in the town, most of who university students, police impounded shisha pots and pipes as the culprits took off.

Mr Moses Wawuya, the head of the district environment police, noted that despite being warned on allowing people to smoke shisha from their premises, bar operators have failed to



To face arrest. A man lights a cigarette. Mukono District leadership and police have embarked on a joint campaign to enforce the Tobacco Control Act. FILE PHOTO

take heed.

According to police, Shisha smoking is lucrative on the side of bar owners, a reason many proprietors of bars have refused to comply with the law. Its reported that an individual is charged Shs10,000 for a smoking session.

"We are trying to join efforts to ensure that the law is fully enforced but we want to first sensitise the smokers," he said.

Mr Wawuya said several arrests have been made since last year in different discothèques

and bars around Mukono Town.

Mr Moses Talibita, the legal officer for Uganda National Health Consumer's Organisation, said more operations will be conducted in the district until residents completely stop smoking.

Dr Sheila Ndyabangi, the programme manager mental health and substance abuse in the Ministry of Health, welcomed the initiative by the medics, describing it as a big boost to their campaign to end

tobacco smoking in the country.

"We have carried out various workshops in Kampala, training people on implementing the Tobacco Control Act and happy that medics have come out to support this cause," she said.

Dr Ndyabangi said the public has to be sensitised if the fight against tobacco smoking is to succeed.

"If the public refuses to comply, then things cannot go well. They (public) should not keep quiet, let them attack and stop those who smoke. They should also speak to managers of bars and other places to stop tobacco smoking," she said.

THE TOBACCO LAW

Enacted. The Tobacco Control Act, 2015 was passed by Parliament on July 28, 2015, assented to by the President on September 19, 2015 and gazetted on November 18 the same year.

Provisions. The law provides for stringent measures aimed at protecting non-smokers from the health, social, economic and environmental consequences of tobacco use and exposure.

According to the law, any person who contravenes the Tobacco Control Act is liable to imprisonment of a term not less than a year or pay a fine of Shs420,000 or both.

Recently, MPs complained about the delayed enforcement of the law, which was enacted on May 19 last year, saying smoking in public has persisted.