

SENEGAL

(October 1998)

Compared to such countries as China and Russia, the West African nation of Senegal is neither a major producer nor consumer of tobacco products. As a result, it has received relatively little attention from international tobacco control activists. Nevertheless, it too is subjected to aggressive campaigns by the tobacco companies, and tobacco use will have a similar effect on the health of its citizens over the long term. Since Africa has the lowest smoking rates in the world, the multinational tobacco companies see it as a region with great potential for market growth in the future. At the same time, since Senegal is an influential leader among francophone countries in Africa, its actions with regard to tobacco control could have an important impact in the region.

In Senegal, tobacco has become an increasing burden, not only on the country's health care system but also on its economy. In the early 1990s, Senegal produced around 3.35 billion cigarettes annually (or 0.1% of world production), in addition to importing about one billion cigarettes per year. Although Senegal does not grow any significant amounts of the crop, in 1996 it produced 1,566 tons of unmanufactured tobacco. Senegal spends much more on imports of cigarettes and tobacco leaf than it earns in exports, using up precious foreign exchange that could be used for more pressing needs. In 1996, for example, total exports of tobacco and cigarettes in 1996 amounted to slightly more than \$656,000, while imports totaled around \$7.6 million.¹

The Senegalese government has backtracked on tobacco control legislation in recent years. Meanwhile, the tobacco industry is gearing up for a major expansion of production,² which will worsen the negative economic, health, and environmental impacts of tobacco.

Prevalence

According to the World Health Organization, Senegalese are smoking more and more -- annual per capita adult consumption rose from 430 in the early 1970s to 1050 in the early 1990s.

Although more comprehensive studies are needed, the smoking prevalence surveys that have been conducted in Senegal paint a troubling picture. Smoking rates among young people are particularly alarming. A 1989 survey among 390 children between the ages of 10 and 12 in the capital of Dakar, found that 71% of boys and 52% of girls smoked. Among children not attending school, 87% were smokers. A 1989 a survey of medical students found that over one quarter of them smoked. Eighty-seven percent of these students were aware of the damaging effects of smoking on health, but many were unable to cite specific effects (such as cancer or emphysema). A separate survey found that an estimated 48% of male and 35% of female clerical workers over the age of 40 smoked.³

There are no comprehensive statistics on the health impact of smoking in Senegal. However, given the increase in cigarette consumption over the past twenty years, we can expect that the incidence of lung cancer and other smoking related diseases will rise in the future.

Impact of Foreign Companies

The *Manufacture de Tabacs de l'Ouest Africain* (MTOA) controls the vast majority (95%) of the Senegalese cigarette market. This monopoly is only 3% Senegalese-owned, the rest being controlled by the French tobacco company Coralma International, which in turn is owned by two French companies, Bollore and SEITA,⁴ MTOA is the 10th largest company in Senegal. Although not government owned, the MTOA has a very cozy relationship with the Senegalese government, making it difficult for other companies to enter the market.⁵

In addition to its own brands, MTOA has licensing agreements with foreign cigarette companies to produce brand name names including Marlboro, Dunhill, Excellence, and St. Moritz.⁶ Both Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds have had a presence in Senegal since the 1980s. Philip Morris has a licensing agreement with MTOA to produce the Marlboro and L & M brands. Marlboros are particularly popular among youth. RJR used to market its Gold Coast brand, before it turned its focus to marketing Camels. The company introduced its Camel brand in Senegal in 1986,⁷ but since it imports its cigarettes, it must pay higher taxes than the domestically produced brands.⁸

Since the mid-1980s, MTOA's Dakar factory has rapidly increased production, causing cigarette imports to decline dramatically. Cigarette imports, which accounted for 45% of domestic consumption in 1989, saw their share of the domestic market fall to 5% by 1991.⁹ MTOA has been so successful at increasing output at its Dakar plant that it is rumored to be preparing to build a second cigarette manufacturing plant in the city of Thies, an hour outside of Dakar.¹⁰

The US Ambassador to Senegal appears to be supportive of tobacco control efforts. He recently issued a statement on World No Tobacco Day calling on the Senegalese people to emulate US-style tobacco control measures "to protect the health of its citizens, the youth in particular."¹¹ He added that the heavy impact of tobacco on health and social costs has been felt by the US government and people.

Tobacco Control Measures

In the early 1980s, Senegal was one of the first African nations to pass sweeping tobacco control legislation, including a ban on television advertising, and bans on smoking in some public places. Since then, however, the legislation has been watered down or simply eliminated due to pressure from the tobacco companies. The tobacco companies and their allies in the media successfully fought the advertising restrictions, arguing that it discriminated against local tobacco companies and was ineffective, since newspapers and radio stations produced outside of the country were still allowed to have cigarette advertisements. Today, both TV advertising (primarily through sponsorship of sports and cultural/musical events) and smoking in public places are commonplace. Despite the ban, a majority of young people surveyed by investigator Anna White have told her that they have seen "cigarette advertising" on TV. And, it is not uncommon to see teachers smoking in the local high schools, and doctors and nurses smoking on the job in the main hospital.¹²

Cigarette companies continue to be among the most active sponsors of sporting events in Senegal.¹³ They also sponsor youth dances and give away tobacco products and promotional items. There are no restrictions on selling cigarettes to minors.¹⁴

Marlboro, Camel and L&M brands all promote an "American" image to lure young Senegalese (many of whom admire anything from America) using such slogans such as "The cigarette sold most around the world!" (Marlboro), and "The *real* American taste!" (L&M).¹⁵ The country's most beloved wrestler Mohamed "Tyson" Ndour (namesake of the American boxer), who does his trademark dance wearing an American flag after every victory, helped to promote Marlboro in a TV advertisement which showed a close-up of Tyson giving a thumbs-up sign as the camera panned "M-A-R-L-B-O-R-O" across the screen.¹⁶ What's more, investigator Anna White estimates that "at least 90% of all cigarette billboards in Senegal show Caucasians only, a striking phenomenon in a country whose only light-skinned people are essentially albino or tourists." Meanwhile, the Marlboro man is present in most stores and Marlboro umbrellas are used by all kinds of street vendors - even by traditional healers in Dakar.¹⁷

Dunhill has set up fancy wooden kiosks throughout the country which read "New York * London * Paris." It sponsors the local Dakar radio station as well as musical and sporting events, including the an annual International Tennis Tournament in Dakar. The Excellence brand is known for its phrase "La perfection à chaque instant" ("Perfection at every moment"). Excellence ads often show high society white people next to a posh car or on a fancy cruise boat in the company of a token African male.

Marlboro sponsors musical events and a national sweepstakes with prizes including automobiles, while an L&M sweepstake offered a free trip to the United States. In addition to the Marlboro man, who is seen around the country on billboards and posters, Marlboro women clad in skimpy outfits often hand out free cigarettes in popular nightclubs – a practice which is illegal. The Marlboro logo is also found on all kinds of consumer products, including backpacks, baseball caps, t-shirts and clocks.¹⁸

Prior to President Clinton's visit to Senegal in early 1998, Philip Morris reportedly removed all its advertising (posters, billboards, and radio spots).¹⁹ Now that the visit is over, company representatives are busy repainting whole storefronts in the Marlboro colors. It appears that Marlboro's aggressive marketing strategies have paid off, making it one of, if not *the*, most popular brand in Senegal. Other brands in high demand are Excellence and Dunhill.

One particularly illustrative example of the tobacco companies' manipulation of images to promote their products was found in the promotion of "Nelson" cigarettes in Senegal by the French tobacco company, Coralma. An advertisement showing attractive young people on a motor boat said "Long Live Nelson! The Cigarettes for Brave People". The Nelson cigarette package carried a symbol of the Statue of Liberty, conveniently tying in the American image that sells so well among the young. The release of the cigarettes followed shortly after Nelson Mandela was freed from prison in South Africa. In response, Nelson Mandela said that he was unaware of the use of his name for these purposes, and emphasized that he would never have agreed to sponsor cigarettes, since he is a strong believer that "smoking should be discouraged, most particularly amongst the young."²⁰

Cigarettes cost between US \$.30 and US \$.80 per pack, but they are often sold singly at \$.02 to \$.04 each. While this may seem relatively cheap by US standards, in a country where average GNP per capita only about \$730 per year,²¹ it represents a large expense for smokers. For example, a person who smokes a pack a day spends about \$12.00 per month on the habit, representing about 5% of the average family income.²²

Conclusion

Although the situation in Senegal appears dim, there is still hope that successful tobacco control initiatives can be implemented in the future. Some of the most successful public health campaigns on tobacco control have been carried out by non-governmental organizations. Although they face severe funding limitations, these groups have focused on educating the public -and youth in particular- about the dangers of smoking. The Anti-Tobacco Movement of Senegal (MAT- a sister organization of the San Francisco Tobacco Free Project.), for example, was awarded the Gold Medal from the World Health Organization for their youth programs. The group's health education campaign has reached some 36,000 students. It has also assisted in the formation of 80 youth anti-tobacco clubs.²³

In May 1998, twelve organizations joined together in Dakar to form the "Federation of NGOs Fighting Against Tobacco." The Federation will push for the implementation of Senegal's two year old (and not yet implemented) National Anti-Tobacco Plan, lobby for passage and implementation of strong anti-tobacco laws, and tap into international funding for an ambitious national anti-tobacco awareness program.²⁴

Resources

San Francisco Tobacco Free Project
<http://www.globalink.org/gtm/SFTFP>

MAT/Senegal Mouvement Anti-Tabac-Senegal (MAT)
<http://www.polarisinc.com/MAT/>

World Health Organization Country Case Studies:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/osh/who/whofirst.htm>

Tobacco BBS (useful news and resources on tobacco):
<http://www.tobacco.org>

IRRC Tobacco Information Service (profiles of tobacco companies around the world)
<http://www.irrc.org/profile/tis/tishome.htm>

This case study was originally developed by the Tobacco Free Project of the San Francisco Department of Public Health with funding from Proposition 99, the Tobacco Tax Initiative, under contract 89-97927. The author, Mary Purcell, would like to thank Anna White for her assistance.

EndNotes

¹ Bureau of Statistics, Dakar, Senegal.

²“Senegal: Tobacco Industry Sets Production Target of 300 TPY by 2000, vs. 52 TPY in 1988 and 28 TPY in 1997,” *Marches Tropicaux & Mediterraneens*, 17 April 1998.

³“Senegal,” *Tobacco or Health: A Global Status Report*, World Health Organization, 1997.

⁴ Seita Home Page: <http://www.seita.fr/GB/ra95gb/cigaint/cigaint.html>.

⁵ *Reuter Press Briefing*, 20 July, 1994.

⁶ Mouvement Anti-Tabac-Senegal, Senegal, 1994.

⁷ “RJR: A Global Brand, Camel Gains in the International Market,” *Tobacco International*, vol. 188, no. 5, pgs. 42-43, 7 March, 1986.

⁸ Anna White, *memo*, 17 June, 1998.

⁹ Mouvement Anti-Tabac-Senegal, Senegal, 1994.

¹⁰ Anna White, *memo*, 17 June, 1998.

¹¹ “U.S. Ambassador Cautions on Tobacco Publicity,” *Pan African News Agency*, 31 May, 1998.

¹² Anna White, *memo*, 17 June, 1998.

¹³“U.S. Ambassador Cautions On Tobacco Publicity,” *Pan African News Agency*, 31 May, 1998.

¹⁴Carol McGruder, *Tobacco's Global Ghettos: Big Tobacco Targets The World's Poor*, Tobacco Free Coalition, San Francisco.

¹⁵ Anna White, “Cigarette marketing in Senegal, West Africa,” *Tobacco Control*, No. 6, 1997.

¹⁶ Anna White, “Going up in Smoke: Africa's Anti-Tobacco Movement is Outgunned by Advertising,” *Sunday News Journal*, Wilmington, Del, 31 May 1998.

¹⁷ Anna White, “Cigarette marketing in Senegal, West Africa,” *Tobacco Control*, No. 6, 1997..

¹⁸ Anna White, *memo*, 17 June, 1998.

¹⁹ Anna White, *memo*, 17 June, 1998 (based on interviews with store owners and a local radio station technician).

²⁰ “Long Live Nelson!,” *Tobacco Control*, vol. 2, 1993.

²¹ “Senegal,” *Tobacco or Health: A Global Status Report*, World Health Organization, 1997.

²² Anna White, *memo*, 17 June 1998 and “Cigarette marketing in Senegal, West Africa,” *Tobacco Control*, No. 6, 1997.

²³ MAT Home Page: <http://www.polarisinc.com/MAT/>.

²⁴ Anna White, *memo*, 8 June, 1998.