

ALUMNI IN THE SPOTLIGHT: EVELYN

Posted on May 28, 2020 by McCabe Centre for Law and Cancer



[Updates](#)

[FCTC2030, Sierra Leone, World No Tobacco Day](#)

For World No Tobacco Day 2020, we are shining the spotlight on Evelyn Yeama Mannah.

Evelyn is Parliamentary Counsel at the Ministry of Justice in Sierra Leone, and an alumni of the McCabe Centre's [three-week intensive legal training course](#).

Evelyn wants the youth of Sierra Leone to live a healthy, tobacco-free life. But she believes that law in her country does not adequately protect young people from buying and selling tobacco, or from the harms of second-hand smoke.

After attending the McCabe Centre's May 2019 session in Melbourne, where she strengthened her knowledge on using law and policy to improve health outcomes, Evelyn returned to Sierra Leone determined to address the gaps in her country's tobacco policy.

She has since dedicated her priority project as a McCabe Centre alumni to helping draft comprehensive tobacco control legislation that prohibits children from buying and selling tobacco, as well as other provisions in line with the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Sierra Leone was selected as one of the [fifteen initial FCTC2030 countries](#) to support their work in

accelerating implementation of the FCTC as a sustainable development priority.

Though Evelyn's work on the project is ongoing, we asked her to share more about her important work – which embodies the theme for this year's [World No Tobacco Day](#) of protecting youth from tobacco use and industry manipulation.

Why did you choose a priority project aimed at protecting youth from tobacco?

Tobacco use by youth causes both immediate and long-term damage. One of the most serious health effects is nicotine addiction, which prolongs tobacco use and can lead to severe health consequences.

Youth are also vulnerable to social and environmental influences to use tobacco. Messages and images that make tobacco use appealing to them are everywhere. These youth are unaware of the health risks of tobacco use. Manufacturers and importers are using this opportunity to make tobacco use look appealing to this age group.

What is the current situation around youth tobacco use in Sierra Leone?

In Sierra Leone, 70% of tobacco users, and those who are exposed to second-hand smoke, are youths. Smoking is often portrayed as a social norm amongst the youths. Youth identify with peers they see as social leaders and imitate their behaviour – which has made the number of youth smokers increase drastically.

What impact do you hope this project will have on public health in Sierra Leone?

The enactment of the Tobacco Control Law would raise awareness amongst youth about the negative effect of tobacco use and second-hand smoke. It would also regulate the advertisement, branding and sale of tobacco by manufacturers and importers of tobacco products.

How has training and support from the McCabe Centre helped you with your project so far?

The legal training session I attended in Melbourne has helped me immensely in my project by enhancing my legal skills in the drafting of the Tobacco Control Bill. I was taught how a comprehensive law can play a great role in controlling and regulating the use of tobacco products in any country.