

UP IN SMOKE A STUDY GUIDE

TOBACCO VALUE CHAIN

The production, distribution, and consumption of cigarettes involve a set of activities to encode social and economic value in cigarettes. The activities are represented in a tobacco value chain that spans several continents and relies on labor forms like rural farmers (“sharecroppers”) and factory workers. Malawi’s tobacco value chain connects the tobacco tenancy system and the habitual smoker in the U.S., and makes visible the men, women, and children that devote their lives to tobacco.

PRODUCTION

HARVESTING. This first step is a labor-intensive activity involving high amounts of child labor. Using only their hands, tobacco household members remove leaves from plant stalks.

DRYING. Once harvested, leaves are transferred to drying sheds, sewn together, placed on drying sticks, and air-cured. Tobacco quality and storage time are dependent on weather conditions.

BALING. A manual operated “jack” is used to make tobacco bales weighing up to 120 kgs. Workers load leaf of the same grade and compress it into bales wrapped in hessian, or burlap, cloth.

DISTRIBUTION

SELLING. During the selling season farmers sell tobacco to U.S. buyers at the Lilongwe auction floors. Farmers are told the date of sale so they can observe the auctioning of their tobacco bales.

BUYING. 3 U.S. subsidiary companies buy over 95% of Malawi’s tobacco and sell to cigarette makers like Philip Morris. Limbe Leaf, a subsidiary of Universal Corporation (Virginia) purchases 50% of the crop.

TRANSPORTING. 20 tons of tobacco are packed in 40-ft containers and transported by road from Malawi to South Africa. Malawi’s tobacco is loaded onto cargo ships and exported to over 70 countries.

CONSUMPTION

MANUFACTURING. Philip Morris and other global firms manufacture 5.5 trillion cigarettes a year. American-blend cigarettes, like Marlboros, typically contain burley leaf from Malawi.

MARKETING. U.S. tobacco firms spent \$11 billion dollars to promote smoking in 2001. Philip Morris’ Marlboros are one of the most valuable and leading cigarette brands in the world.

CONSUMPTION. Each time a consumer lights a cigarette a relationship is established between smoker and tobacco farmer in places like Malawi. Global firms operate to conceal the social cost of production.

WEB RESOURCES

PRO-HEALTH

World Health Organization:
who.org

Framework Convention Alliance:
fctc.org

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids:
tobaccofreekids.org

MONITORING TRANSNATIONAL TOBACCO CORPORATIONS

Infact’s Philip Morris Campaign:
infact.org

Campaign to Stop Global Tobacco:
sfffp.globalink.org

Global Partnerships for Tobacco Control:
essentialaction.org/tobacco/
Responsible Investing:
bigtobaccosucks.org

FILMS/AUDIO PROGRAMS

Holy Smoke- Cambodians Fight Tobacco:
tve.org/lifeonline/index.cfm?aid=1021

India Inhales:
tve.org/lifeonline/index.cfm?aid=1143

Philip Morris in the Corporate Hot Seat:
adbusters.org/campaigns/corporate/

Big Tobacco Gets a Facelift:
tobaccofreekids.org/altria/

Unfiltered Truth About Tobacco:
unfilteredtv.com/flash.html

Global Tobacco in Nigeria Radio Program:
fsrn.org/news/20021224_news.html

TOBACCO COURSES

From Seedling to Social Policy:
personal.umich.edu/kwarner/Courses.html

The International Tobacco Industry:
health.usyd.edu.au/tob21c/m09_faqs.html

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BE A TOBACCO WORKER?

Compare 2 individuals connected to tobacco production and discuss their roles and opinions on the social, economic, and environmental problems raised in *Up in Smoke* and the extended interviews section on the DVD. Research the different issues facing the individuals by utilizing the web sites listed on page 1 of the study guide. Write a short story, poem, or song to demonstrate the contrasting opinions and concerns pertaining to public health, crop diversification and corporate accountability.



Matthews Nkhoma

Joyce & Gladys

Leo Keffa Agrippa

Charles Graham

Deforestation

Kenny Woolard

QUESTIONS

1. Before watching *Up in Smoke*, ask viewers: Who grows the tobacco in cigarettes? How does tobacco growing help and/or harm people and the environment in tobacco dependent areas?
2. After watching the film, ask viewers: What are the points of agreement and disagreement between tobacco workers and estate landlords? Between landlords and tobacco company executives? Between company executives and government officials?
3. How do the buying practices of Limbe Leaf (a subsidiary of Universal Corporation, Virginia) and other leaf companies influence the different layers of social relations in Malawi's tobacco sector?
4. What roles should agricultural workers, landlords, trade unions, governments, and corporations play in promoting access to clean water, food security, and a living wage in tobacco growing areas like Malawi?
5. What are some different strategies to end Malawi's dependence on tobacco? To achieve crop diversification, what obstacles need to be overcome at the farm level? At the state level? At the global level?
6. How do corporate responsibility programs contribute to the elimination of child labor in Malawi? Is Philip Morris using child labor programs to buy a socially responsible reputation?

ACTIVITIES

1. Have participants examine the key activities on the tobacco value chain. First, research the value chain activities on the web sites listed on page 1, then prepare a diagram illustrating steps in which people in places like Malawi encode tobacco with social and economic value. Alternatively, select a product you recently purchased and recreate a value chain.
2. Construct a table with the contrasting opinions about what should happen to end Malawi's tobacco dependency. Issues include education and retraining, credit access for farmers, trade policies, and crop diversification. Groups with vested interests are tobacco workers, trade unionists, corporate executives, public health educators, and government officials.
3. Conduct a "mock" world health conference focused on adopting a global tobacco treaty. Divide into 4 groups: U.S. trade reps, economic advisors to Malawi's president, public health experts, and youth anti-smoking advocates. Groups present their positions on ad bans, health warnings on cigarette packs, and use of terms like "light" and "mild" in tobacco marketing.
4. The 6 profiles above represent different lived realities of the global tobacco industry. How might their experiences or work conditions improve if consumers demanded changes from companies like Philip Morris? Should each of the individuals above be hopeful about his/her future? Why or why not?