



Health Action International Asia Pacific (HAIAP)
(in collaboration with USM TWN DMDC IIUM)



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HAIAP News Bulletin, 1 November 2023

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1. News from HAIAP

1.1 'Commercial Determinants of Health' seminar on Nov 6&7, on-line and in-person.

From Barbara Mintzes

DEADLINE NOVEMBER 1 TO REGISTER

'Commercial determinants of health' refers to private sector activities shaping public health and health policy. These market-driven influences have been called 'the elephant in the room' due to their strength and pervasiveness, often associated with the profit-driven activities of large, powerful corporations. *Commercial determinants of health: Unpacking industry influence* features a keynote address by Professor [Laura Schmidt](#) from the University of California, San Francisco. This two-day symposium brings together leading researchers to explore the range of influences that industries exert on health and discuss how best to work within this context to advance public health.

On day one the speakers address the influences of big food, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, gambling, alcohol, and the environment on health. On day two, the researchers lead us through a thought-provoking discussion on the cross-cutting influences of, and policy responses to, research, marketing and regulatory policy. Please join us in-person or online.

<https://preventioncentre.org.au/event/evidence-policy-and-influence-collaborative-epic-2023-symposium/>

Link to the program and registration: [Invitation | Evidence, Policy and Influence Collaborative 2023 Symposium | 6–7 November 2023 \(sydney.edu.au\)](#)

A report of the seminar will be available after the event.

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1.2 Remembering Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury in Kerala.

Dr B Ekbal has been travelling to all the 14 districts in Kerala as a **'Tribute to Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury: Fifty years of People's Health Movement'** for Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP). The aim of this activity is to ensure that the new generation of health activists know about the contributions of Zafrullah and the various initiatives taken globally as part of making health for all a reality. Thirteen districts have been completed and Dr Ekbal will be going to Palghat district for the last part of the program.

He will provide a description of the program for our December HAIAP News.

1.3 TWN: Under pressure J&J announces non-enforcement of bedaquiline patents in low and middle income countries

K M Gopakumar

Read the whole article here:

https://www.twn.my/title2/intellectual_property/info.service/2023/ip231001.htm

Pharmaceutical giant Johnson and Johnson (J&J) announced the non-enforcement of its 'evergreening' patents on the tuberculosis (TB) medicine bedaquiline in 134 low- and middle- income countries.

The announcement came after mounting global pressure on the company against its practice of extending market monopoly using multiple patents even after the expiry of the original patent on the bedaquiline chemical molecule.

Bedaquiline is a designated essential medicine under the WHO's Model List of Essential Medicines for the treatment of drug resistant TB. In 2020, the civil society mobilisation against the high prices of bedaquiline forced J&J to reduce the price to USD 1.50 per day. Similarly, in India TB survivors approached the Bombay High Court seeking a government use licence for the generic production of bedaquiline and delamanid for the enhancement of treatment access.

The first patent on the bedaquiline molecule expired in July 2023. However, the generic availability was threatened by evergreening patent applications pending in many countries including in high TB burden countries like South Africa. The announcement is now expected to pave the way for the generic availability in 134 low- and middle-income countries. However, the announcement of J&J does not provide any such list. A footnote in the announcement states: 'The *list of low- and middle-income countries is available upon request.*'

1.4 Malaysia DG Health supports WHO stance on Pandemic Treaty

The DG's statement can be seen here:

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/10/27/msia-clear-on-stance-in-who-pandemic-treaty-ihr-negotiations---health-dg>

According to Chee Yoke Ling the anti WHO critics have been hounding the Malaysian MOH prompting the statement from the DG. She said 'TWN is working very closely on negotiations - working with several country delegations in Geneva who have formed *'Friends of Equity'* to fight for an agreement that benefits developing countries and those countries are the majority. There are allies and opponents and it is very important for member states to assert their right and they are in the majority. Being united in common defence of our public health systems and health priorities in key.'

2. Information sharing

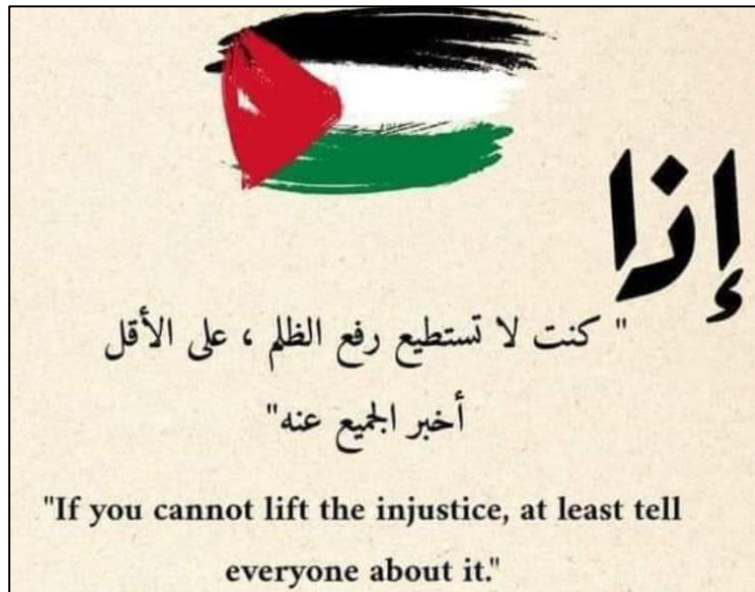
2.1 Solidarity with Palestine

The October 7 Hamas attack on Israeli citizens and the taking of hostages were atrocities whose details and perpetration are still being clarified. An essential aspect of our reflection on these tragic events is an informed understanding of the history and contextual circumstances that contributed to the horrific tragedies still unfolding as of publication.

Many thanks to Chan Chee Khoo for sharing so much relevant information.

Examining 'Ten Myths about Israel', by Ilan Pappé

<https://mondoweiss.net/2018/01/examining-myths-israel/>



From a review by Allan Brownfield January 2018.

This review of the book 'Ten Myths About Israel' by Ilan Pappé is too long to include here in full - extracts are provided. Please get the full review from the above link. The detail is important.

In this book, written on the 50th anniversary of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Professor Ilan Pappé, an Israeli historian now teaching at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom, examines the most contested ideas concerning the origins and identity of the contemporary state of Israel.

The 'ten myths' that Pappé explore reinforce the regional status quo. He explores the claim that Palestine was an empty land at the

time of the Balfour Declaration, as well as the formation of Zionism and its role in the early decades of nation building. He asks whether the Palestinians voluntarily left their homeland in 1948, and whether June 1967 was a war of 'no choice.'

Historical Disinformation

The wilful misunderstanding of history can promote oppression and protect a regime of colonisation and occupation. It is not surprising, therefore, that policies of disinformation continue to the present and play an important part in perpetuating the conflict. The Zionist historical account of how the disputed land became the state of Israel is based on a cluster of myths that subtly cast doubt on the Palestinians' moral right to the land. This book challenges these myths, which appear in the public domain as indisputable truths. These statements

are, to my eyes, distortions and fabrications that can—and must—be refuted through a closer examination of the historical record.

This book is yet another attempt to redress the balance of power on behalf of the colonised, occupied and oppressed Palestinians in the land of Israel and Palestine. The book is written by an Israeli Jew who cares about his own society as much as he does the Palestinian one. Refuting mythologies that sustain injustice should be of benefit to everyone living in the country or wishing to live there.

The first myth which is confronted is the Zionist claim that Palestine was an empty land. There is a consensus among scholars that it was the Romans who gave the land the name 'Palestine.' During the period of Roman and, later Byzantine, rule it was an imperial province. Various Muslim empires aspired to control it, since it was home to the second holiest place in Islam and was also fertile and in a strategic location. The Ottoman period began in 1517 and lasted 400 years. When the Ottomans arrived, they found a society that was mostly Sunni Muslim and rural, with small urban elites who spoke Arabic. Less than 5 per cent of the population was Jewish and probably 10 to 15 per cent Christian.

The research of David Grossman (the demographer not the novelist), Amnon Cohen and Yehoushua Ben-Arieh shows that, over the centuries, Palestine, rather than being a desert, was a thriving Arab society. Yet, Pappe reports, 'Outside of Israel, in particular in the United States, the assumption that the promised land was empty, desolate, and barren before the arrival of Zionism is still alive and kicking.

Palestine began to develop as a nation long before the arrival of the Zionist movement. In the hands of energetic local rulers such as Daher al-Umar (1690-1775), the towns of Haifa, Shefamn, Tiberias, and Acre were renovated and re-energised. The coastal network of ports and towns boomed through its trade connections with Europe, while the inner plains traded inland with nearby regions. The very opposite of a desert.'

Contrary to the notion of Palestine being an 'empty land,' Pappe shows that, 'It was part of a rich and fertile eastern Mediterranean world that in the 19th century underwent processes of modernisation and nationalisation. It was not a desert waiting to come into bloom; it was a pastoral country on the verge of entering the 20th century as a modern society, with all the benefits and ills of such a transformation. Its colonisation by the Zionist movement turned this process into a disaster for the majority of the native people living there.'

The second myth considered is that, 'The Jews were a People Without a Land.' Asking whether the Jewish settlers who arrived in Palestine could be considered 'a people,' Pappe cites Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Jewish People*, which shows that the Christian world, in its own interest, adopted the idea of the Jews as a nation that must one day return to the holy land. This return, in their view, would be part of the divine scheme for the end of the world, along with the resurrection of the dead and the second coming of the Messiah.

'Zionism,' writes Pappe, 'was therefore a Christian project of colonisation before it became a Jewish one.

There has been much speculation, Pappe points out, about whether the Jews who settled in Palestine as Zionists were really the descendants of the Jews who had been exiled 2,000 years ago. Arthur Koestler (1905-83) wrote *The Thirteenth Tribe* (1976) in which he advanced the theory that the Jewish settlers were descended from the Khazars, a Turkish nation of the Caucasus which converted to Judaism in the 8th century and was later forced to move westward. Israeli scientists have ever since tried to prove that there is a genetic connection between the Jews of Roman Palestine and those of present-day Palestine. That debate continues today.

In making the case that Jews were a nation belonging to Palestine, and therefore should be helped to return to it, Pappe notes, 'They had to rely on British officials and, later, British military power'.

Of particular interest is the chapter dealing with the myth that, 'Zionism is Judaism.' In fact, Zionism was originally a minority opinion among Jews. 'Since its inception in the mid-19th century' writes Pappe, 'Zionism was only one, inessential expression of Jewish cultural life. It was born out of two impulses among Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe. The first was a search for safety within a society that refused to integrate Jews as equals and that occasionally persecuted them. The second impulse was a wish to emulate other new national movements mushrooming in Europe at the time. Those Jews who sought to transform Judaism from a religion into a nation were not unique among the many ethnic and religious groups within the two crumbling empires—the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman—who wished to redefine themselves as nations.'

The Zionists sought to colonise Palestine.

Another myth which Pappe confronts is, 'Zionism Is Not Colonialism.' When the first Zionist settlers arrived in 1882, the land of Palestine was not empty. The settlers were told by their leaders that the locals were not natives, that they had no rights to the land. Instead, they were a problem that had to, and could, be resolved.

None of this, Pappe argues, was unique because 'Zionism was a settler colonial movement, similar to the movements of Europeans who had colonised the two Americas, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Settler colonialism is motivated by a desire to take over land in a foreign country, while classical colonialism covets the natural resources in its new geographic possession. In many cases, the accepted method for overcoming obstacles was the genocide of the indigenous locals.'

From the beginning, Palestinian resistance was depicted as motivated by hate for Jews. The diaries of the early Zionists tell a different story. They are filled with anecdotes revealing how the settlers were well received by the Palestinians, who offered them shelter and in many cases taught them how to cultivate the land. 'Only when it became clear that the settlers had not come to live alongside the native population, but in place of it, did the Palestinian resistance begin,' writes Pappe. 'And when that resistance started, it quickly took the form of every other anti-colonialist struggle.'

The Israeli government has long promoted the idea that the Palestinians voluntarily left their homeland in 1948. It has promoted the idea that Palestinians fled their villages of their own accord or on orders from Arab armies that wanted them out of the way. Israel's so-called 'new historians,' notably Benny Morris, examined newly opened Israeli archives and found no evidence that the refugees fled on orders from Arab leaders, but had done so mostly out of terror, after hearing reports of massacres carried out by Israeli soldiers in villages such as Deir Yassin, where Jewish militiamen killed over 100 Palestinian civilians. This idea that the Palestinians left voluntarily is another of the 'myths' Pappe confronts.

In 1937, David Ben-Gurion told the Zionist assembly, 'In many parts of the country, it will not be possible to settle without transferring the Arab *fellahin*. With compulsory transfer we would have a vast area for settlement. I support compulsory transfer. I don't see anything immoral in it.'

In his book 'The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine,' Pappe examines the development of a master plan for the massive expulsion on the Palestinians. Officially, the Israeli government maintains the claim that Palestinians became refugees because their leaders told them to leave. 'But,' he writes, 'there was no such call—it is a myth created by the Israeli foreign ministry... What is clear is that the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians can in no way be justified as a 'punishment' for their rejecting a U.N. peace plan that was devised without any consultation with the Palestinians themselves.'

War Crime

Pappe declares that, 'From the present vantage point, there is no escape from defining the Israeli actions in the Palestinian countryside as a war crime... The crime committed by the leadership of the Zionist movement, which became the government of Israel, was that of ethnic cleansing. This is not mere rhetoric, but an indictment with far-reaching political, legal and moral obligations. The definition of the crime was clarified in the aftermath of the 1990's civil war in the Balkans: ethnic cleansing is any action by one ethnic group meant to drive out another ethnic group with the purpose of transforming a mixed ethnic region into a pure one. Such an action amounts to ethnic cleansing regardless of the means employed to obtain it—from persuasion and threats to expulsions and mass killings.'

It is important to remember, Pappe points out, that, 'There are Jews in Israel who have absorbed all these lessons. Not all Jews are indifferent to or ignorant of the *Nakba*. Those who are not are currently a small minority, but one which makes its presence felt, demonstrating that at least some Jewish citizens are not deaf to the cries, pain, and devastation of those killed, raped, or wounded throughout 1948.'

Other myths confronted by the author include: 'The June 1967 War Was A War of 'No Choice,' 'Israel Is The Only Democracy In The Middle East,' 'The Oslo Mythologies' 'The Gaza Mythologies,' and 'The Two-States Solution Is The Only Way Forward.'

In the case of the 1967 war, the accepted narrative is that the 1967 war forced Israel to occupy the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and keep it in custody until the Palestinians were prepared to make peace. Many think that the 1967 war was one in which Israel was resisting attack and occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza in self-defense. The fact is that it was Israel which launched the first strike against Egypt in 1967. Prime Minister Menachem Begin later said: 'In June 1967 we again had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentration in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack them.'

In reality, Pappe believes, '...the takeover of the West Bank in particular, with its ancient biblical sights, was a Zionist aim even before 1948 and it fitted the logic of the Zionist project as a whole. This logic can be summarised as the wish to take over as much of Palestine as possible with as few Palestinians as possible... After the occupation, the new ruler confined the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in an impossible limbo: they were neither refugees nor citizens—they were, and still are, citizenless inhabitants. They were inmates, and in many respects still are, of a huge prison in which they have no civil, and human rights and no impact on their

future. The world tolerates this situation because Israel claims—and the claim was never challenged until recently—that the situation is temporary...Israel is still incarcerating a third generation of Palestinians...and depicting these mega-prisons as temporary...'

Law of Return

Israel's Law of Return grants automatic citizenship to every Jew in the world, wherever he or she was born. In Pappé's view, 'This law...is a flagrantly undemocratic one, for it was accompanied by a total rejection of the Palestinian right of return—recognised internationally by the U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194 of 1948. This rejection refuses to allow the Palestinian citizens of Israel to unite with immediate family members or with those who were expelled in 1948. Denying people the right to return to their homeland, and at the same time offering the right to others who have no connection to the land is a model of undemocratic process.'

'Imagine,' writes Pappé, 'if in the UK or the U.S., Jewish citizens, or Catholics for that matter, were barred by law from living in certain villages, neighbourhoods, or maybe whole towns? How can such a situation be reconciled with the notion of democracy?... [Israel] cannot by any stretch of the imagination, be assumed to be a democracy.' When it comes to Palestinians living in the occupied territories, he declares, 'the humiliation of millions of Palestinians is a daily routine, 'the only democracy in the Middle East' behaves as a dictatorship of the worst kind.'

Unlawful Killings and Torture

Amnesty International annually documents the nature of the occupation. Its 2015 report provided this assessment: 'In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli forces committed unlawful killings of Palestinian civilians, including children, and detained thousands of Palestinians who protested against or otherwise opposed Israel's continuing military occupation, holding hundreds in administrative detention. Torture and other ill treatment remained rife and were committed with impunity. The authorities continued to promote illegal settlements in the West Bank and severely restricted Palestinians' freedom of movement... The authorities continued to demolish Palestinian homes on the West Bank and inside Israel, particularly in Bedouin villages in the Negev/Naqab region, forcibly evicting their residents.'

In the original Oslo Accords (1993) there was an Israeli promise that the three issues that trouble the Palestinians most—the fate of Jerusalem, the refugees, and the Jewish settlements—would be negotiated when the interim period of five years came to a successful end. This process, however, was stalled by the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, followed by the victory of Likud, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996. Netanyahu opposed the Oslo Accords and the process came to a halt.

Looking to the future, Pappé believes that the declaration that, 'The two states solution is the only way forward' is yet another myth. He notes that, 'Any criticism of this myth is often branded as anti-Semitism. However, in many ways the opposite is true: there is a connection between the new anti-Semitism and the myth itself. The two-states solution is based on the idea that a Jewish state is the best solution for the Jewish problem; that is, Jews should live in Palestine rather than anywhere else. This notion is also close to the hearts of anti-Semites. The two-states solution, indirectly one should say, is based on the assumption that Israel and Judaism are the same. Thus, Israel insists that what it does, it does in the name of Judaism, and when its actions are rejected by people around the world the criticism is not only directed toward Israel but also towards Judaism... It seems that nothing is going to stop Israel now from completing its colonisation of the West Bank and continuing its siege on Gaza.'

A Just Solution

A just solution to the dilemma of Palestine will, Pappé concludes, only be achieved if we stop treating the mythologies he sets forth as truths: 'Palestine was not empty and the Jewish people had homelands; Palestine was colonised, not 'redeemed'; and its people were dispossessed in 1948, rather than leaving voluntarily. Colonised people, even under the U.N. Charter, have the right to struggle for their liberation...and the successful ending to such a struggle lies in the creation of a democratic state that includes all of its inhabitants.'

Since Ilan Pappé completed his book, Israel has moved even further away from a two state solution. The ruling Likud Party's central committee, early in 2018, endorsed a resolution calling for the annexation of the West Bank settlements. Prime Minister Netanyahu no longer speaks of the establishment of a Palestinian state. The very idea of a Palestinian state ever coming into existence is rejected by Israel's current government.

To understand how we have come to this point, after 75 years of oppressive occupation, and to consider how, in the face of the latest developments, we can look forward to a more hopeful future, this important book by Ilan Pappé is essential reading. Abandoning myths and confronting reality is an important first step forward.

Further resources and information:

PHM Solidarity Statement: The People's Health Movement (PHM) reaffirms its support and solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for their freedom, land and dignity.

<https://phmovement.org/stand-palestine>

There's immorality in Christian-Zionist project of seeking legitimacy for Israel: Illan Pappé

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVlh8g3pkgY&list=PL-NstfOtnb8KSxuMiYa6dRISW8WXX-TD&index=2&t=373s>

Why Evangelical Christians Love Israel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo77sTGpngQ&ab_channel=VICENews

'We went to sleep in 2023 and woke up in 1948.' Amnesty

<https://amnestyinternationalaustralia.cmail19.com/t/d-e-vdyuhut-ijdrihell-n/>

Lancet: Save Gaza residents from imminent catastrophe October 12, 2023

<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2823%2902299-7>

International Centre for Justice for Palestinians: Letter to UK Government - Notice of intention to prosecute UK officials complicit in war crimes in Gaza

<https://www.icjpalastine.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ICJP-LETTER-TO-GOVERNMENT-13-Oct-2023.pdf>

US Healthcare workers against Palestine genocide

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdxkXVc5jb5adBYPYuEkfCZsE7a3e5B2rRg1rgnkYgRFu4tQ/viewform>

The Connection Between Archaeology and Ideology in the Middle East By Uri Avnery

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/01/02/the-connection-between-archaeology-and-ideology-in-the-middle-east/>

2.2 Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer will increase the USA list price of Paxlovid — its COVID-19 antiviral medication — to almost \$1,400 per treatment.

from Public Citizen

<https://publiccitizen.salsalabs.org/tell-pfizer-do-not-increase-paxlovid-price/index.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=b3f048da-2e8b-4eaf-9ada-1f51a26cca08#1>

- That's more than two-and-a-half times what the federal government has been paying for the lifesaving drug.
- Researchers at Harvard University estimate that it costs \$13.38 cents to make the five-day course of Paxlovid that Pfizer will now be listing at \$1,390 — a 10,389% markup.
- By the way, Pfizer made \$18 billion last year from Paxlovid — most of which came from purchases by governments (i.e. taxpayers).
- But with the worst of the pandemic (hopefully) behind us, Pfizer's profits from its various COVID-related products are falling.
- So here comes more Big Pharma price gouging.

Public Citizen sent a message to Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla:

'You were already price gouging the American people on Paxlovid. And now you want to jack up the list price by 2.6 times more? Haven't you made (more than) enough money from the worst pandemic in any of our lifetimes? We call on you to reverse your decision to increase the list price of Paxlovid. In fact, you should lower the price and license Paxlovid to other manufacturers to sell it at a low price.'

2.3 Don't count on PPP solutions.

While public-private partnerships (PPPs) are usually profitable for the private partners, they have generally not served the longer-term public interest, argues Jomo Kwame Sundaram*

Read the whole article here

<https://www.twn.my/title2/finance/2023/fi231001.htm>

In recent years, public-private partnerships (PPPs) have spread rapidly. While usually profitable for the private partners, PPPs have generally not served the longer-term public interest.

Increased private financing supposedly also overcomes public sector incapacity to deliver high-quality infrastructure and public services. Undoubtedly, many government capacities have been diminished by decades of structural adjustment, austerity and less public finance.

This has been worsened by rich countries' unmet commitments to contribute 0.7% of national income as official development assistance (ODA) on concessional terms. The global North has also been unwilling to effectively stem illicit financial outflows, e.g., due to tax dodging.

PPP promotion has involved many means, media and institutions, including "donor" agencies, multilateral development banks (MDBs), UN agencies, international consultants, transnational accounting firms, and the World Economic Forum (WEF).

PPPs have not delivered

Actual experiences have not confirmed the favourable impression promoted by PPP advocates. Instead, PPPs have become a major cause for concern.

Reliable data on international PPP trends are hard to find. Also, different PPP definitions and terminology have confused reporting.

The World Bank's Private Participation in Infrastructure Projects Database reports on economic infrastructure – such as for energy, transport, water and sewerage – in 137 low- and middle-income countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly disrupted PPP planning, preparation and procurement. But even the World Bank admits that delays and cancellations were not only due to COVID-19 as the pandemic exposed projects already in trouble for other reasons.

Nonetheless, PPPs' financial impacts to date have been small, as the public sector continues to dominate. But little private investment – including PPPs – goes to low-income countries. Most such projects are concentrated in a few countries.

The major setbacks to both the SDGs and climate progress in the last decade are not only due to financing. But they are more than enough to underscore that recent reliance on blended finance and PPPs has worsened, rather than helped the situation. The empire of private finance has no clothes!

2.4 Tax exemption for Oxfam India, CARE India, Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment and Envionics Trust has been revoked.

Sumedha Mittal 15 Oct, 2023

from Mira Shiva

Read the whole article here:

<https://www.newslandry.com/2023/10/14/i-t-dept-revokes-tax-exemption-status-of-4-ngos-letters-to-two-mention-protests-against-adani>

Oxfam and other rights-based NGOs have to fight to exist in India.

The Indian government does not like them because they are often the source of criticism of the govt and standing up for people's rights. The government lists what these sorts of organisations are allowed to do and has its own interpretation of what is allowed.

Oxfam India's website says that the non-profit works to 'ensure that Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, and informal sector workers, especially women and girls, have safe-violence free lives with freedom to speak their mind, equal opportunities to realise their rights, and a discrimination free future'.

If the Indian govt interprets many activities as outside the 'remit' of such organisations. Organisations can be banned from the country at worst but as a first 'reprimand' have their tax free status revoked.

This has happened now with the help of Adani who accuse Oxfam and others of opposing their projects.

2.5 Philip Morris lobbying to stop WHO 'attack' on vapes and similar products

Leaked email shows firm behind Marlboro cigarettes critical of global 'prohibitionist' agenda

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/oct/12/philip-morris-lobbying-to-stop-who-attack-on-vapes-and-similar-products>

(Many countries are taking steps towards banning nicotine e-products - not only the UK)

Philip Morris International (PMI), the tobacco and vaping company behind Marlboro cigarettes, is waging a big lobbying campaign to prevent countries from cracking down on vapes and similar products as part of a global treaty, a leaked email reveals.

The company, which has been increasingly focusing on smoke-free products as governments tighten regulations on cigarettes, made \$10.19bn in revenues from products such as heated tobacco and electronic cigarettes in 2022.

There is growing scrutiny of vaping products, with ministers in the UK taking the first step towards banning candy-coloured disposable e-cigarettes in England. A consultation has been launched on plans to crack down on vaping by young people and ban smoking altogether, to create the first 'smoke-free generation'. The health secretary, Steve Barclay, said this month he was concerned about figures that showed the number of children who vaped had tripled in the past three years.

The WHO framework convention on tobacco control (FCTC), which takes place next month in Panama, will discuss possible regulation, including taxation, on smoke-free products.

In the email, PMI suggested it had seen the agenda for the convention, which focused on smoke-free products. In 2016, the tobacco company announced a transformation of its business away from cigarettes and set itself an objective to replace them with heated tobacco products, e-vapour products and nicotine pouches.

In 2022, PMI shipped 621bn cigarettes, according to its annual results. However, about a third of its revenues were derived from smoke-free products, while the volume of combustible tobacco products decreased by 27%.

The email sent on 22 September by Grégoire Verdeaux, the senior vice-president of external affairs at PMI, said: 'The agenda and meeting documents have been made public for the main part. Unfortunately they reconfirmed every concern we had that this conference may remain as the biggest missed opportunity ever in tobacco control's history ... WHO's agenda is nothing short of a systematic, methodical, prohibitionist attack on smoke-free products.'