

# Betel Quid, Hookah, & Khat Use in the Karen and Somali Communities of Minnesota

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MINNESOTA TOBACCO CONTROL CONFERENCE  
ST. PAUL RIVERCENTRE  
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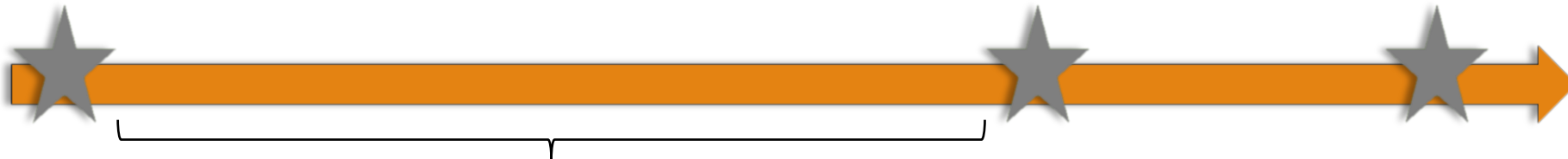


**1979 - Minnesota International  
Health Volunteers**

Post-war Vietnam refugee  
camps in Thailand

**2010 – WellShare  
International**

**Present Day**  
Uganda  
Tanzania  
United States



**Worked in**  
Nicaragua  
Kenya  
Haiti  
Uganda  
Tanzania  
United States

# Our Mission

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To advance sustainable community health around the world



5,500+ Community Health Workers

# A lot goes into creating sustainable change



# WellShare International's Tobacco Programs

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## East African Smoke-Free Program

Est. 2013

Funded by Tobacco-Free Communities grant at Minnesota Department of Health

To reduce the impact of tobacco and secondhand smoke on the East African community in Minnesota through education and outreach

## Karen Tobacco-Free Program

Est. 2016

Funded by Center for Prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota

To educate the Karen community on the harms of tobacco and to eliminate the use of tobacco in indoor and outdoor settings

# Betel Quid in the Karen Community of Minnesota

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THA DAH (DIANA) LOO, COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

WELLSHARE INTERNATIONAL, KAREN ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA



# What is Betel Quid?

Combination of **betel nut**, **lime paste**, and **piper betel vine**

**Tobacco** and other spices are often added

Has **stimulant** and **relaxation** effects





# Global Statistics

- Chewed by ~600 million people worldwide
- Increased rates of betel quid chewing in immigrant population
- Britain: 46.3% of 8,922 participants
- South & Southeast Asia: 99.6%



The screenshot shows a CNN news article. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the CNN logo and links for World, Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, and Middle East. Below this is a banner for 'REAL GIFTS FOR EVERY GIRL' featuring a woman in a red dress. The main headline reads 'Nothing to smile about: Asia's deadly addiction to betel nuts'. The byline is 'By Hilary Whiteman, CNN' and the update time is 'Updated 8:06 PM ET, Tue November 5, 2013'. There are social media sharing icons for WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. Below the headline is a large photo of a man smiling, showing his stained teeth. To the right of the photo is a 'Top stories' section with three items: 'Santa's dying boy: Tell heaven you're my No. 1', 'The babies who scream heroin', and an advertisement for Chegg with the text 'STRESS LEVEL HIGHER THAN YOUR GPA' and 'BOOST YOUR GPA'. Below the photo, there is a caption: 'Photos: Hidden dangers of betel quids'. At the bottom, there is a short paragraph: 'Say "betel nut" - A man shows off his stained teeth, dyed red from years of chewing betel quids, potent parcels of areca nuts, lime and tobacco wrapped in a betel leaf. They give users a buzz when they're chewed.' and a URL: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/04/world/asia/myanmar-betel-nut-cancer/>

# Health Effects

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Associated with:

**Oral cancer** (lips, mouth, tongue)

**Cancer of the esophagus**

**Oral submucous fibrosis (OSF)**

**High smoking rate**

Regular chewing can cause:

**Gum irritation**

**Tooth decay**

**Permanent stain** (red or black)

# Perceptions & Reasons for Use

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Betel quid is **perceived to be healthier** than smoking, making it more acceptable

Approximately 98% of Karen smokers chew betel quid

Some believe that betel quid chewing helps keep the teeth strong

## WHY CHEW?

- To socialize
- Cope with stress
- Alternative to smoking or to help with quitting



<https://capmn.wordpress.com/tag/karen/>

# Cost and Second generation Users

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Regular chewers: 8-12 quids a day

Approximately **\$100-\$120 a month** spent on betel quid

*“ I chew two to three betel quid in the morning. In the afternoon and evening, I chew five to six quid, but sometimes I chew more.” - Karen chewer*

Younger generation started chewing because parents chew

Readily available

# Sanitary Issues

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- Property managers/landlords complain about smell & stains
- Spit in trash bin and empty bottles
- Spit on sidewalks



# What are we doing to address this?

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## Education

- Karen Tobacco-Free Program
- Adult classes – community facilities
- Youth – After school programs

## Outreach

- Media campaign
- Culturally appropriate resources

# Recommendations

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Educate the Karen community on the harms of betel quid chewing

Increase number of culturally appropriate resources

Incorporate medical providers and religious leaders

Advocate for policy changes to ban importation and usage

# Hookah & Khat Use in the Somali Community of Minnesota

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ABDILLAHI GANEY, PROGRAM ASSISTANT/COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

WELLSHARE INTERNATIONAL



# HOOKAH

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NOTES FROM OUR PROGRAM



# What is Hookah?

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Waterpipe with water bowl, pipe, & hose with mouthpiece(s)

Used to smoke flavored tobacco

Passed around & shared

Other name: Shisha

Originated in India, centuries ago



# How does it work?

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The flavored tobacco inserted and burned

Use the water as a “filter” (TOBACCO SMOKE IS NOT FILTERED)

Smoke goes through the water and you inhale that smoke

**1 hookah session = 100-200 cigarettes**

Types:

- Traditional hookah
- Mini hookah
- e-Hookahs

(Hookah Pens, Hookah Bracelets)



# Where is it found?

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Hookah lounges, hookah bars, college dorms, in houses/apartment units

Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act (MNCIAA) prohibits smoking in almost all indoor spaces.

MNCIAA has an exemption for “sampling” of tobacco in tobacco shops.

Hookah bars allowed to operate under the MNCIAA exemption.

Local communities can tighten this loophole by choosing to prohibit all sampling exemptions.

# Hookah bars are very fancy



<https://financialtribune.com/articles/people/42734/hookah-home-delivery-a-new-fear>

# Who uses it?

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Youth (in general population and in Somali population)

Somali women more than men

In Somali community, underage use it a lot (teenagers)

# What are the health effects?

Similar as health effects for cigarettes

- Oral cancer
- Lung cancer
- Stomach cancer
- Cancer of the esophagus
- Reduced lung function
- Decreased fertility



Shisha  
may smell  
like fruit,  
but it is as  
**DANGEROUS**  
as  
cigarettes.

Learn more...

**East African Smoke-Free Program**  
*Save Money. Save Lives. Become Smoke-Free.*

**WellShare**  
International.

612-230-3251 | [eastfp@WellShareInternational.com](http://eastfp@WellShareInternational.com) | [f East African Smoke-Free Program](https://www.facebook.com/EastAfricanSmokeFreeProgram) | [t @EASFP](https://twitter.com/EASFP)

This program is funded by a Tobacco-Free Communities Grant from the Minnesota Department of Health.

# What are the health effects?

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Hookah has higher CO levels than cigarettes

- Nonsmoker: 3 part per million (ppm)
- Heavy cigarette smokers: 30-40ppm
- **Hookah smokers: 40-70ppm**

High levels of carbon monoxide in the breath are indicative of high CO levels in the blood. High CO levels in the blood are dangerous and potentially deadly.

Social nature of hookah may result in spread of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis.

Concerns of dual use



# Secondhand Smoke & Hookah

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Many use inside their homes (indoor activity) – fire risk!

Cannot use outside the house/balcony, etc.

Children are subjected to secondhand smoke

- More asthma cases among children

Smoke from tobacco AND charcoal

Normalizes hookah

Stigma attached to women smoking cigarettes; not the case with hookah

# Secondhand Smoke & Hookah

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Secondhand smoke from hookah contains the same toxic chemicals as secondhand smoke from cigarettes:

- Formaldehyde
- Ammonia
- Carbon monoxide
- Hydrogen cyanide



# Misconceptions

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Many individuals believe:

- ...that it is not as bad as cigarettes
- ...that it is healthier because they are smoking fruits
- ...that water filters out the tobacco
- ...that smoking hookah can aid in weight loss
- ...that smoking hookah can help with quitting smoking  
(start hookah to quit cigarettes = common in Somali community)



# What are we doing to address this?

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## Working with youth

- The Young Achievers
- Metro Schools

## Education & Outreach

- Media campaign
- Culturally appropriate resources
- Events/tabling
- Clinical video

## Assessment

## Social media

## Smoke-free properties

## Smoke-free institutions

## Smoke-free events

# Recommendations

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Educate the Somali community on the harms of hookah

Culturally appropriate resources

Incorporate religious leaders

Advocate for healthier pastimes like walking or working out together

Organize and advocate to tighten sampling loophole

# KHAT

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WHAT WE KNOW



# What is it?

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Leafy plant, often wrapped in banana leaves

Chewed

Stimulant

Mostly used by men, especially in Somalia

Illegal in the United States and in UK (as of 2014); Legal in Somalia

Grown in Ethiopia & Kenya



# What are the health effects?

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Less powerful amphetamine

Talkative

Temporary confusion

Insomnia

Sense of calm

Can exacerbate mental health issues (anxiety, depression)

Inflames mouth

Damages teeth

Oral cancer(s)





# Dual use

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Khat and cigarettes or hookah are often used simultaneously

Chewing Khat makes smoking cigarettes “feel good”

Many Somalis who do not smoke regularly, will smoke when chewing Khat



Betel Quid	Hookah/Shisha	Khat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plant-based</li> <li>▪ Chewed</li> <li>▪ Stimulant (Cholinergic)</li> <li>▪ Karen population*</li> <li>▪ Side effects: dizziness, metabolic syndrome, stimulant effects, stained teeth, gum disease, oral cancer</li> <li>▪ Legal in U.S.</li> <li>▪ Imported; local Asian markets; available on eBay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-plant based</li> <li>▪ Smoked</li> <li>▪ Stimulant (Cholinergic)</li> <li>▪ Somali &amp; Oromo populations*</li> <li>▪ Side effects: Same as cigarettes</li> <li>▪ Long-term use: Same as cigarettes – cancer, heart disease, respiratory diseases</li> <li>▪ Legal in U.S.</li> <li>▪ Imported; found in tobacco shops</li> <li>▪ Can spread infectious diseases (TB, Hepatitis B)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plant-based</li> <li>▪ Chewed</li> <li>▪ Stimulant (psychomotor)</li> <li>▪ Somali population*</li> <li>▪ Side effects: Dizziness, thirst, hunger, euphoria, talkative, hyperactivity, emotional instability, hallucinations, depression</li> <li>▪ Long-term use: constant euphoria, lethargy, depression, nightmares, tremors, constipation</li> <li>▪ Illegal in U.S.</li> <li>▪ If found, it is imported; found in black market</li> </ul>

\*Applies to Minnesota only

# THANK YOU!

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Funding is provided for the Karen Tobacco-Free Program by The Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.

The East African Smoke-Free Program is funded by funding by a Tobacco-Free Communities grant from the Minnesota Department of Health.

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