

Regional Plan of Action for Tobacco Control

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Plan of Action for Tobacco Control (2006-2010) contains the vision and strategic plan for tobacco control in the South-East Asia Region for five years.

The plan of action was based on the Regional Strategy for Tobacco Control (2006-2010). Countries of the South-East Asia Region have constantly shown their strong commitment towards tobacco control. Ten out of eleven countries have signed the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and eight countries have ratified it.

The Regional Strategy on Tobacco Control set a framework for comprehensive tobacco control in the Region based on the provisions of FCTC. Parties to the Convention are legally bound to implement the provisions in the treaty; on the other hand, non-party Member States would also require effective tobacco control programmes to combat the tobacco epidemic. While the Convention provides guidelines to reduce the harm from tobacco, definitive actions to control tobacco have to take place at regional and country levels. Successful implementation of FCTC provisions depends almost entirely on the ability of countries to implement and enforce its provisions.

2. ISSUES

Tobacco consumption in the Region is increasing, especially among the youth and the poor. The increase in tobacco consumption is due to many reasons; the recent socio-economic developments in the Region making it a lucrative market for the tobacco industry. Increasing population, easy availability of cheap tobacco products, lack of tobacco control regulations and weak enforcement of existing regulations are some factors that contribute to the increase in tobacco consumption.

The tobacco consumption scenario in the Region is also very different from others in its complexity. There is great variation in the pattern and mode of tobacco use, both in smoking and smokeless forms, such as cheroots, amongst near family members and friends.

Tobacco-related illnesses such as cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases are already major problems in most countries in the Region. Tobacco-related cancers account for about half of all cancers among men and one-fourth among women. It has been estimated that there were approximately 1.1 million deaths in the Region attributable to tobacco in the year 2000.

A considerable amount of tobacco was produced in the Region. Indonesia is the largest producer of cigarettes followed by India, Thailand and Bangladesh.

Although Member States have tobacco control regulations, only two countries have comprehensive tobacco control legislation. Countries are also in need of comprehensive tobacco control policies and national plans of actions.

3. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the Regional Plan of Action is to reduce tobacco uptake and consumption, promote cessation of tobacco use, protect non-smokers from exposure to second hand smoke and protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke.

4. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the Regional Plan of Action are to support Member States :

- (1) in formulating, promoting and implementing national policy and plan of action for tobacco control ;
- (2) in developing, enacting, promulgating, implementing and enforcing comprehensive national tobacco control legislation, as appropriate, in line with WHO FCTC;
- (3) in promoting awareness on the dangers of tobacco use by enhancing education, training, communication and advocacy through wider media coverage including counter-marketing so as to prevent initiation and promoting cessation of tobacco use;
- (4) in strengthening inter-agency collaboration and partnership at country and regional levels for tobacco control interventions;

- (5) in protecting non-smokers from exposure to second hand smoke by taking measures to designate smoke-free places including health and education facilities, work places, public places and public transport;
- (6) in banning on all forms of tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship;
- (7) in establishing appropriate tax and price measures aimed at minimizing tobacco consumption, and
- (8) in strengthening and updating on a regular basis the regional online database on tobacco control measures and information.

5. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The Regional Plan of Action for Tobacco Control is based on the following fundamental principles:

- (1) Tobacco control activities should be anti-smoking and anti-tobacco use but neither anti-smoker nor anti-tobacco user.
- (2) Tobacco control activities should promote non-smoking and non-tobacco use as the social norm.
- (3) All citizens of Member States have the right to receive adequate and correct information regarding health, social and economic hazards of tobacco and effective tobacco control measures.
- (4) Consumers have a fundamental right to consumption of safe products and the right to relevant information.
- (5) All smokers and tobacco users would receive support for tobacco cessation.
- (6) All non-smokers, especially children, have the right not to be exposed to second hand smoke.
- (7) Clear target groups (high-risk and hard to access) would be identified, such as adolescents, out-of-school youth, women, low-income groups and less educated groups. Tobacco control strategies should target these populations and also populations with the highest prevalence of smoking/tobacco use and diseases attributable to tobacco.
- (8) Community interventions for protecting the youth, enforcement of smoke-free places and strengthening health literacy should be enhanced.

- (9) Strong political commitment towards tobacco control should be evident in the nature of forming multisectoral committees for tobacco control, designation of national and regional tobacco control focal points and allocation of specific and adequate funds for tobacco control programmes.
- (10) Countries should set up their own mechanisms to mobilize funds for tobacco control activities.
- (11) WHO would support countries in identifying sources of funding and mobilize resources to sustain national tobacco control programmes.
- (12) Tobacco control programmes and interventions should be partnered with relevant health and non-health programmes.
- (13) Inter-agency collaboration and partnership at the regional level would be promoted for tobacco control interventions.
- (14) Tobacco control interventions in low-income and less educated groups should be delivered as part of broader national poverty alleviation measures.

6. TARGETS

- (1) To have comprehensive, sustainable and accountable national and sub-national policies and strategies for tobacco control in all Member States within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with the countries.
- (2) To have a comprehensive ban on all forms of tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with Member States.
- (3) To have limitation of access to tobacco products by minors in all countries within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with Member States.
- (4) To have all health and education facilities, workplaces, public places and public transport in the Region to be tobacco-free within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with Member States.
- (5) To establish an on-line database for tobacco surveillance and to establish TFI websites in all countries of the Region within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with Member States.

- (6) To have clear, visible and rotating health warning labels on all manufactured cigarettes and cigarette-packages manufactured in and imported into the Region within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with Member States. Efforts will also be made to bring other tobacco products under health warning.
- (7) To have national tobacco legislation in all countries of the Region within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with Member States.
- (8) To establish national laboratories in one or two countries of the Region for testing tobacco products and to measure the yields of toxic constituents from tobacco product emissions.
- (9) To show a decrease in per capita tobacco consumption of at least 1% by the end of 2010.

7. PLAN OF ACTION

Objective 1

To formulate, promote and implement national policies and plans of action for tobacco control in Member States.

Purpose

To achieve a significant reduction in tobacco morbidity and mortality with a decline in tobacco consumption, it is essential for countries to develop national policies and plans of action for tobacco control that are periodically monitored and evaluated. The plans of action should ensure multisectoral coordination and cooperation between related sectors as well as civil societies.

Target

To have comprehensive, sustainable and accountable national and sub-national policies and strategies for tobacco control in all Member States by the end of 2007.

Strategic Actions for Member States

- *Set-up High level National Tobacco Control Committees* during 2005-2006 with the health sector taking the leading role. The committees

should be multisectoral and include related governmental departments, agencies and representatives from civil societies and media groups. The role of these committees is to address tobacco control issues at national level as well as cross-border issues. Existing committees should be reviewed and strengthened to address FCTC issues. Sub-committees will be necessary in specific areas such as legislation, communication, education and information, research etc. Sub-national committees should also be formed at provincial and district levels.

- *Establish Tobacco Control Cell* with designated national focal point for tobacco control in the Ministry of Health and also focal persons at various decentralized levels.
- *Conduct Situational analysis* by countries on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOT analysis) of their national tobacco control programmes during 2005-2006. WHO should support the conduct of a regional SWOT analysis providing feedback to the countries. The surveys should come up with recommendations to develop or improve a comprehensive national tobacco control programme. The surveys should also include questions which will help in the development, monitoring and evaluation of tobacco control programmes.
- *Establish National Tobacco Control Programmes* with dedicated staff, if not already existing, or strengthen existing national tobacco control programmes incorporating the recommendations from the SWOT analysis. Countries should seek mechanisms to ensure allocation of sufficient time, staff, resources and training.
- *Reviewing existing national tobacco control policies and plans of action* and amend them, as appropriate, to reflect the provisions of WHO FCTC, as a minimum standard for a comprehensive approach to tobacco control. If no policies or plans exist, develop new ones that are consistent with or more stringent than WHO FCTC. Countries should develop comprehensive plans that strongly reflect political commitment on tobacco control. The plans should also incorporate a strong monitoring and evaluation component. The development of a national policy and plan of action on tobacco control should be accomplished within a time-frame determined by WHO in consultation with Member States.

Strategic Actions for WHO

- *Disseminate guidelines* for establishing and sustaining national multisectoral tobacco control committees.

- *Identify* Member States that having no national tobacco control programmes at present and *provide technical assistance* for the establishment of these programmes.
- Provide technical assistance for *SWOT analysis*.
- Support technical training and assistance to selected countries in *capacity building* in tobacco control infrastructure and policy development and comprehensive approaches in line with FCTC provisions.
- *Develop strategies* for tobacco control in children, adolescents (both in and out of school) and women, with particular emphasis on lower income and other high-risk groups.
- Conduct intercountry meeting of national focal points for tobacco control every year.
- Conduct *Tobacco Control Programme Reviews* in six countries including implementation status of FCTC during 2006-2007 and for four countries in 2008-2009.
- Conduct a Regional Dissemination Workshop on Evaluation of Tobacco Control in the last quarter of each biennium.

Objective 2

To develop, enact, promulgate, implement and enforce comprehensive national tobacco control legislation, as appropriate, in all Member States in line with WHO FCTC.

Objective 5

To protect non-smokers from exposure to second hand smoke by taking measures to designate smoke-free places including health and education facilities, work places, public places and public transport.

Objective 6

To ban on all forms of tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship.

Purpose

To put the policy into action and to enforce implementation, countries need to develop comprehensive tobacco control legislation in line with the

provisions of FCTC. Parties to the Convention are obliged to have national legislation to implement FCTC provisions. Currently, Thailand and India have national tobacco control legislation, whereas some countries are in various stages of developing national legislation, a few countries still lack tobacco control regulations.

Targets

- To have national tobacco legislation in all countries of the Region by the end of 2010.
- To have limitation of access to tobacco products by minors in all countries within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with Member States.
- To have all health and education facilities, workplaces, public places and public transport in the Region to be tobacco-free within a time-frame to be determined by WHO in consultation with Member States.
- To have clear, visible and rotating health warning labels on all manufactured cigarettes and cigarette-packages manufactured in and imported into the Region by 2010. Effects will also be made to bring other tobacco products under health warning.
- To establish national laboratories in one or two countries of the Region for testing tobacco products and to measure the yields of toxic constituents from tobacco product emissions.

Strategic Actions for Member States

- Conduct *advocacy campaigns* at various levels with emphasis on the obligations of FCTC.
- Countries that do not have tobacco control legislation would conduct advocacy campaigns based on evidence-based best practices and *submit draft proposals on national tobacco legislation* to decision-makers through National Tobacco Control Committees. Countries could exchange experiences in this regard.
- Countries that are in the stage of drafting legislation would *enhance the process to be able to enact law* within a time-frame set by WHO in consultation with Member States.

- Countries that have already enacted tobacco control legislation would need to conduct *campaigns to promulgate and enforce the same*. Community awareness campaigns are also required to disseminate information to the general public and law enforcement personnel.
- National tobacco control legislation should cover the following areas as the minimum basic components of legislation:
 - (a) Comprehensive ban on all forms of tobacco advertisement, sponsorship and promotion.
 - (b) Designation of health and educational institutions, workplaces, public transport and specific public places as smoke-free/tobacco-free areas.
 - (c) Ban on sales of tobacco to and by minors (under the age set by the national law or 18 years of age, whichever is lower).
 - (d) Prominent health warnings in local language on at least 30% of both surfaces of the package.
- Establish national laboratories in one or two countries of the Region for testing tobacco products and to measure the yields of toxic constituents from tobacco product emissions.
- Conduct studies on illicit trade and cross-border advertisement of tobacco and share information between countries.
- Develop and enhance collaborative interventions with neighbouring countries on product regulation, control of illicit trade of tobacco products and cross-border advertisement. Countries should coordinate in the monitoring, collection of data and sharing of information relating to smuggling of tobacco products.
- Countries should adopt tax and price policies whereby taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products should be periodically and harmoniously increased aimed at bringing about an increase in the real price of tobacco products that is greater than the effects of inflation. A proportion of tobacco revenue should be marked for tobacco control and health promotion programmes.
- Countries should adopt and implement measures for testing and measuring contents of tobacco products and emissions from tobacco smoke; they should also implement measures to disclose to governmental authorities and the public, information about the contents and emissions of tobacco products.

Strategic Actions for WHO

- Provide technical assistance on drafting tobacco control legislation by reviewing, collecting and sharing best-practice models that are applicable to countries.
- Develop generic guidelines for enforcement of tobacco control legislation.
- Monitor progress of countries in this area and render any assistance required.
- Workshop on legislation and establishment and implementation of comprehensive tobacco control measures.
- Support negotiations of protocols to FCTC.
- Conduct workshop on product regulation.
- Support/strengthen laboratory testing capacities of countries.
- Assist countries to establish alliances and networks that will enable them to respond more effectively to cross-border tobacco control issues at regional and international levels.
- Convene bi-regional meeting with the Western Pacific Region (WPRO) to tackle cross-border issues, particularly smuggling and harmonizing tobacco product regulation.

Objective 3

To enhance awareness on dangers of tobacco use by enhancing education, training, communication and advocacy through wider media coverage including counter-marketing so as to prevent initiation and to promote cessation of tobacco use.

Purpose

To provide adequate and correct information regarding health, social and economic hazards of tobacco to all citizens as their right, with special emphasis on target groups such as adolescents, out-of-school youth, women and low-income and less-educated groups.

Strategic Actions for Member States

- Conduct advocacy/training workshops for media personnel in the 2006-2007 biennium.

- Conduct anti-tobacco campaigns through wider media coverage via both paid and unpaid media in collaboration with UN and international agencies, national and international NGOs and media personnel. Media coverage can be promoted through paid advertising and also by efforts to secure maximum unpaid publicity. Pooling of limited resources and sharing of experts among anti-tobacco advocates is essential to generate unpaid media publicity.
- Develop counter-marketing activities with the active involvement of the youth force.
- Develop and implement effective and appropriate basic curricula and training programmes on tobacco control programmes for policy-makers, health professionals, students, educators, media personnel and other relevant persons.
- Identify high-risk and hard-to-reach populations and formulate specific plans to reach them. Reallocate funds to reach these populations.
- Incorporate health risks, addictiveness and socioeconomic costs of tobacco consumption and exposure to second hand smoke in the curricula of basic education schools, medical, paramedical and nursing schools, teachers' training schools etc.
- Expand community-based cessation programmes piloted in six countries. Recruit community facilitators and enhance community empowerment of tobacco control programmes.
- Promote community involvement in anti-tobacco campaigns, especially in remote and outreach areas.
- Celebrate World No-Tobacco Day activities annually and maintain momentum throughout the year by activities at sub-national level.
- Participate in international activities such as International Quit and Win Campaigns.
- Identify and utilize existing opportunities to merge tobacco control activities and interventions into related health and non-health programmes. Tobacco control programmes should also be a key component of national development programmes.
- Identify potential partners nationally, within and outside the Region that share common concerns regarding transnational tobacco control issues.
- Advocate for the inclusion of tobacco control transnational issues on the agenda of national, sub-regional and regional bodies for tobacco control.

Strategic Actions for WHO

- Provide technical support for the development of training curricula.
- Assist countries to adapt international guidelines for integrating tobacco control into the curricula.
- Disseminate global strategies and best-practice examples that address gender issues, high-risk and hard-to-reach populations and poverty as they relate to tobacco.
- Develop IEC materials and support countries to launch World No-Tobacco Day themes.
- Conduct workshops on designing and implementing a strong media campaign on tobacco control.
- Conduct regional awareness raising workshops on hazards of smokeless tobacco use.
- Conduct workshops on facility-based and community-based cessation programmes.
- Develop regional guidelines on cessation of tobacco use, based on best-practices and evidence.

Objective 4

To strengthen inter-agency collaboration and partnership at country and regional levels for tobacco control interventions.

Purpose

To bring the problem of tobacco control into the broad purview of relevant health and other programmes for poverty alleviation programmes; to incorporate tobacco control as a key component of rational development assistance programmes. To enhance regional and country-level cooperation and coordination with UN and other international organizations under UN Adhoc task forces. To strengthen intercountry collaboration in tobacco control.

Strategic Actions for Member States

- Conduct workshops at country level on partnership building for tobacco control with relevant Non-Communicable Disease Control Programmes,

Health Promotion Programmes, Tuberculosis Control Programme and other programmes for poverty reduction and environmental protection. Identify and utilize existing opportunities to merge tobacco control policies and interventions into related health and non-health programmes.

- Conduct multisectoral workshops on strengthening collaboration among health, finance, trade, other related departments and international relations sectors at country level in order to improve technical capabilities relating to non-health aspects of FCTC.
- Conduct advocacy workshops for inclusion of tobacco control transnational issues on the agenda of national, sub-regional and regional bodies, such as national health committees, ASEAN, SAARC etc.

Strategic Actions for WHO

- Develop guidelines for inter-agency collaboration at country level.
- Conduct inter-agency meeting on the development of common tobacco control policies and strategies.
- Communicate and coordinate with NGOs and INGOs to provide support for countries in different aspects of tobacco control and conduct research studies in priority areas of tobacco control.
- Conduct workshops for involvement of relevant NGOs and health professional organizations in tobacco control.
- Conduct intercountry workshops on economics of tobacco control including poverty and tobacco, particularly on issues of increase in tax, illicit trade in tobacco trade with the participation of Resident Representatives of UN agencies, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank.
- Conduct a regional workshop on poverty alleviation as a method for reaching MDG (Millennium Development Goals) in collaboration with UNESCAP and other UN agencies, jointly with the SEARO working group on MDG.
- Assist countries in identifying sources of funding and mobilizing financial resources to implement and sustain national tobacco control programmes.

Objective 8

To strengthen and update on a regular basis the regional online database on tobacco control measures and information.

Purpose

To strengthen tobacco surveillance and information system and inter-country collaboration in tobacco control. To establish a mechanism for exchange of information between countries and establish a regional tobacco control network.

Target

To develop a TFI website in the Regional Office with the regional online database. To establish TFI websites in all the countries of the Region by 2008.

Strategic Actions for Member States

- Conduct sentinel prevalence studies on tobacco use at sentinel sites on a regular basis, preferably every two years.
- Implement standard global/regional surveys regularly and evaluate tobacco control programmes and promptly and regularly report them to WHO Regional office.
- Conduct GYTS and health professional surveys with technical and financial support from WHO and CDC.
- Conduct study on economic impact of tobacco in two countries of the Region.
- Conduct a study on health and environment impact of tobacco production and crop substitution/alternative livelihood for tobacco growers in two countries.
- Conduct studies on other priority areas of tobacco control; develop and implement a research agenda that addresses local needs and data gaps.
- Create a national database for tobacco control by gathering and reporting information regarding tobacco growing, manufacturing, production, labour and employment, tax, price, export and import, sale of tobacco etc and compiling reports of all research/surveys being conducted on tobacco in the countries.

- Set-up TFI websites in the ministry of health linking to WHO country offices and Regional Office website.
- Report regularly to the WHO Regional Office for updating of online database.
- Develop and implement a mechanism to disseminate pertinent information to local policy-makers, stakeholders and other key partners including development agencies.
- Communicate and share information with Member States and other countries that have common interest.

Strategic Actions for WHO

- Develop and disseminate regional tobacco surveillance and evaluation instruments and methods; train countries to utilize these, and collect all data from Member States.
- Support countries in operational research on issues of FCTC implementation and to submit results for peer review and publication.
- Support countries to document success stories on tobacco control measures.
- Support country tobacco surveys and surveillance activities.
- Support Global Youth Tobacco Survey activities.
- Support health professional surveys in countries.
- Develop/update regional online database on tobacco control as part of Global Information System on Tobacco Control (GISTOC).
- Integrate tobacco use and other NCD risk factors into national health surveillance and information system.
- Collate all surveys/studies/researches in countries that were/are being conducted.
- Establish computerized and telecommunication channels between WHO and national tobacco cells.
- Support countries in operational research on issues relating to FCTC implementation.
- Support documentation of success stories on tobacco control measures.

- Support exchange of visits of experts to strengthen collaboration in tobacco control.
- Conduct meetings on cross-border advertisement and illicit trade of tobacco products.
- Conduct workshops on health and environmental impact of tobacco production, crop substitution and alternative livelihood for tobacco growers.
- Coordinate data collection from other related health surveys such as STEPwise approach to surveillance (STEPS) and Behaviour Risk Factor Survey (BRFS).
- Improve the regional online database and coordinate with WHO head quarters and other regional offices in developing a standard online database.
- Promote active information exchange among partners and Member States.