



TOBACCO-FREE Times

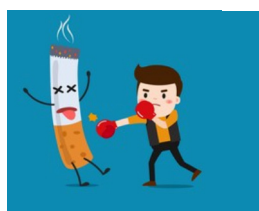
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Issue XVI : September-October, 2021

COP AND MOP SPECIAL EDITION

Ninth Session of the Conference of Parties (COP) of the WHO FCTC and the Second Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products is going to be held virtually from 8–13 November 2021 (COP9) and 15–18 November 2021 (MOP2). In view of the two important global meetings of in tobacco control, the editorial board of the Tobacco Free Times have decided to dedicate this 16th Edition of Tobacco Free Times (TFT) on the priority agenda items of the COP9 and MOP2 for greater understanding and awareness of our readers on the same. The edition will also limelight these issues to policy makers of India and other countries for gaining their commitment towards implementation of different provisions of Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products and WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Celebrating 3-Years of RCTC



India's foremost e-Resource Center for Tobacco Control (e-RCTC) is a storehouse of information on diverse tobacco related particulars and exhibits useful information concerning tobacco control policies which links to tobacco control programs. It is a joint initiative of Post Graduate Institute of Public

Health Education and Research, Chandigarh and The International Union against Tuberculosis and lung diseases (The Union) which collaborates on research and disseminates evidence-based findings to prevent, treat, and control tobacco use in order to create a world free of tobacco. Further, it supports science and research to better understand tobacco use and associated risks so that the public health burden of tobacco in the country can be reduced.



I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the RCTC team and collaborators in conceptualising and allowing this special edition on COP9 and MOP2 along with extending the support for production and dissemination of this important issue to the policymakers and stakeholders engaged in the COP9 and MOP2 process. I am grateful to all the experts who agreed to contribute to this special edition and articulated the progress, priorities and perspectives on the important tobacco control aspects especially with a national and regional focus.

- Dr Amit Yadav,

Senior Technical Adviser, The Union South East Asia Office, New Delhi

EDITOR'S SPEAK



India's first E-Resource Center for Tobacco control features a comprehensive compilation of statistical information about the world's most significant risk factor of cancer i.e. tobacco. Researchers and academicians are continuously seeking this platform to acquire knowledge related to best practices and innovations in tobacco control.

It gives me an immense pleasure to share that this bi-monthly edition of tobacco free times is covering the important components of the two important global meetings of in tobacco control viz. Ninth Session of the Conference of Parties (COP) of the WHO FCTC and the Second Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. I hope this will help our readers for the better understanding of these two meets and further help in enhancing the efforts in tobacco control.

- Dr Sonu Goel,

Director, E-RCTC & Professor, PGIMER Chandigarh

EXPERTS SPEAK



The resource center for tobacco control serve as a model resource for all reliable information for state and district level managers working in tobacco control. It is a unique kind of a portal for tobacco control to assemble all the tobacco related documents under one roof.

- Dr. L. Swasticharan,
Add. D.D.G, MoHFW, GOI



The much awaited Ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to WHO FCTC and second session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP2) to the Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco are scheduled for November 2021.

Continued on page 2...

- Dr Jagdish Kaur,
Regional Advisor, WHO SEA Office



COP-MOP, is taking place at on the backdrop of renewed global goodwill for protection of health. Parties must capitalize on this opportunity, by advocating for greater political will and investment for controlling the tobacco epidemic: one of the greatest threats to public health and well-being.

- Dr. Hassan Mohamed,
National FP for FCTC-Maldives



...Continued from page 1

We are aware that SDG 3a relates to accelerating the FCTC implementation. The COP and MOP will take stock of the progress of FCTC implementation and challenges involved in the same. Countries have faced various challenges including enhanced tobacco industry interference during the COVID-19 pandemic. These two platforms are intended to bring together all the Parties for deliberations and decisions on important agenda items to seek solutions to strengthen global tobacco control.

3 years of RCTC - National level dissemination workshop of initiatives under RCTC for coalition partners and key stakeholders of India'

A national level dissemination workshop of initiatives under RCTC for coalition partners and key stakeholders of India to celebrate 3 years of RCTC was organized by Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh on 20th August 2021 at National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW) New Delhi. Various experts from renowned organizations accorded their presence in the workshop viz. Prof. Harshad Thakur, Director, National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW) New Delhi; Dr. Ravi Mehrotra, Honorary Consultant CHIP Foundation; Prof. Suneela Garg, Director, Professor & Head, Dept. of Community Medicine, Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi; Mr. Deepak Mishra, Executive Director, SEEDS; Dr Poonam Khattar, Acting Head Dept. of Communication, NIHFW, New Delhi; Dr. Sanjiv Kumar, Former Director, International Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), New Delhi; Dr Pankaj Bhardwaj, Professor & Sub-Dean, AIIMS,

Jodhpur; Dr. Nidhi Sejpal, Senior Technical Advisor, The Union; Dr Pradeep Aggarwal, Associate Prof. AIIMS, Rishikesh; Dr. Govind Tripathi, The Union; Dr. Amit Yadav, Senior Technical Advisor, The Union; Dr. Rakesh Gupta, President and Director, Strategi Institute of Public Health Management and Research; Mr Awadhesh Kumar, Executive Director, Balajee Sewa Sansthan; Mr Pranay Lal, Senior Technical Advisor, The Union; Dr. Ravi Kaushik, Assistant Prof. MAMC, Delhi; Dr. Aastha Narula, District Consultant, NTCP, NHM; Premjit Thokchom, Co-Founder & President Sangai Youth Tobacco Free & Educational Organization; Mr. Manish Saxena, Program Officer, MPVHA; Dr. Amod Borle, Assistant Prof. MAMC, Delhi; Dr. Shivam Kapoor, Technical Advisor, The Union; Ms. Renu Sharma, Tehnial Advisor, The Union; Dr. Vikrant Mohanty, Prof. and Head, MAIDS. Dr. Rana J Singh, Deputy Regional Director, The Union and Dr. L Swasticharan, Add. DDG, MoHFW, GOI; graced the occasion by being the Guest of Honours.



Tobacco Free Times 15th Edition released

The 15th edition of tobacco free times with the theme "Sustainable Development Goals and was successfully released in a "National Level Dissemination Workshop of Initiatives under RCTC for Coalition Partners and Key Stakeholders of India to Celebrate 3 years of RCTC" by Dr. Rana J Singh, Deputy Regional Director, The Union and Dr. L Swasticharan, Add. DDG, MoHFW, GOI; (Guest of Honours) in presence The event was organized by Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh on 20th August 2021 at National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW) New Delhi.



5th National Conference on Tobacco or Health held from 25th-27th September 2021



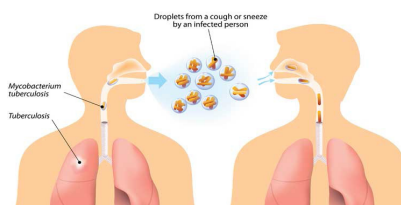
The 5th National Conference on Tobacco or Health was hosted by the Department of Community Medicine & School of Public Health at the prestigious Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, India, from 25th September to 27th September 2021, in collaboration with the International Union against TB and Lung Diseases, South East Asia, and Resource Center for Tobacco Control with support of many organizations and individuals working in tobacco control and overall guidance of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. More than 100 technical sessions with 150+ experts were planned in the astronomical scientific programme. 1000+ delegates across the country had registered for the event to share contextual experiences and best practices in tobacco control in order to advance tobacco control in the country.

Capacity building workshop for officials of different stakeholder department for effective coordination and enforcement of COTPA at district level: Meghalaya

A capacity building workshop for officials of different stakeholder department for effective coordination and enforcement of COTPA at district level was successfully conducted on 21st October, 2021 at Dulong community Hall, Jowai, West Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya. The workshop was attended by a total of 22 participants. Mr. Puramon Kynjing Dolloi, Jowai Elaka, Jowai and Shri. MA hallam, ADC, Jowai, West Jaintia graced the occasion by being the Guest of Honor and chief guest of the event respectively.



Four research papers published in the Indian Journal of Tuberculosis



A total of four research papers were published in the IJTB viz. "Communicating risk: status of health warning labels on various tobacco products in Indian market"; National level E-Resource Center for Tobacco Control (E-RCTC): One stop solution to information on tobacco control in India; Prevalence and factors associated with the sale of loose cigarettes at Point of Sale: A cross-sectional analytical study from four Indian States and Pricing of tobacco products: Pre and Post GST implementation.

High Power Committee for FCTC Article 5.3 approved: Odisha

Two online orientations about Epi Collect app was done with field investigators of DOOR agency on 6th September and 14th September. The agency was hired to conduct the endline survey of the districts under project states for compliance to COTPA. The meeting was attended by the project staff as well.



FCTC
WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
ON TOBACCO CONTROL



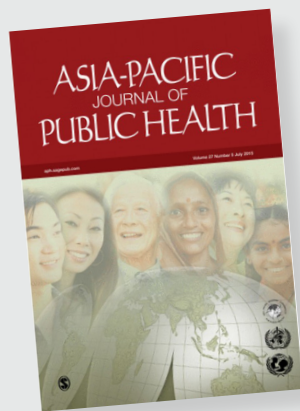
District level Capacity building workshop on National Tobacco control program: Telangana

A District level Online Capacity building workshop upon National Tobacco control program was conducted on 12th October, 2021 organised jointly by State Tobacco Control Cell (NTCP), Telangana and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh. District level program officers and enforcement squads from various districts have attended the workshop. The workshop mainly focused upon "Tobacco Burden, COTPA -2003 Act legislations, Roles and Responsibilities of Program Officers, Tobacco Free Educational Institutions and Implementation of National Tobacco control program in Telangana. Dr. Anusha, Assistant program officer, NTCP - NHM Telangana, Mr. Jagannath Reddy, State program coordinator, NHM Telangana and Dr. Shraavan Kumar, State Program officer, Telangana were the key resource persons of the event. Dr R.Pushpa, Additional Director of NCD graded the occasion by chief guest.



Submission of research paper on Asia Pacific journal on Public Health

A successful submission of threat efficacy paper was done on Asia Pacific journal on Public Health.



An online "Orientation training on End line Assessment survey" conducted

Two online orientations about Epi Collect app was done with field investigators of DOOR agency on 6th September and 14th September. The agency was hired to conduct the endline survey of the districts under project states for compliance to COTPA. The meeting was attended by the project staff as well.



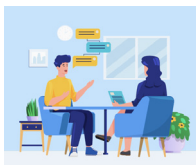
Attended the "State level training on tobacco cessation for DNO and Dental surgeons and for Private Healthcare Facilities": Meghalaya



The State Program Officer, Meghalaya has attended the "State level training on tobacco cessation for DNO and Dental surgeons" by NHM, Meghalaya on 15th September, 2021 and "State level

training on tobacco cessation for Private Healthcare Facilities" on 22nd September, 2021. The training was specifically conducted for District Nodal Officers, Dental surgeons and private health care facilities so that they can assist the program with tobacco cessation activities at their level of jurisdiction.

One-to-One Meetings



A total of twenty nine (29) meetings were held during the month with various high level officials viz. Co-PI, Additional Director NCD, Deputy Director, Food and Safety; Deputy Director Education department; State Nodal Officer, State Consultant - NTCP,

Officials of Municipal Corporation, SNO-cum-Deputy Secretary, Higher Education Dept, Officials of SSEPD Department, District in charge of NTCP and few other stakeholders to discuss future scheduled project activities, organization of District level Capacity building workshop and End line assessment of states.

State Level Training of District Consultant (NTCP)-cum-Assistant Manager (NCD) on NTCP and NCD Activities: Odisha

A State Level Training of District Consultant (NTCP)-cum-Assistant Manager (NCD) on NTCP and NCD Activities was organised by State Tobacco Control Cell, Directorate of Public Health, Government of Odisha on 22th October, 2021 at Computer Lab, NABM, Prasar Bharati, Bhubaneswar. The district consultants-NTCP from all 30 districts participated in the workshop. Director, Public Health, Additional Director (NCD) and State Nodal Officer - NTCP, State Consultant - NTCP, State Epidemiologist (NCD), State Consultant - NCD, Government of Odisha were participated and addressed their inputs. The workshop was Chaired by the Director, Public Health. The State Program Officer under tobacco control project, PGIMER, Chandigarh / AIIMS, Bhubaneswar was also participated in the workshop.



COP AND MOP

Global progress in implementation of the WHO FCTC (special emphasis on the progress made by India since last COP)

- Mr Ashish Kumar Pandey, Deputy Director, The Union, New York, USA



Tobacco control has always struggled to find its place in the priorities list of many parties to FCTC. During the worldwide pandemic, its progress has further slowed down. As of 2020, over 5.3 billion people – 69% of the world's population are covered by at least one MPOWER measure adopted at the highest level. Between 2018-

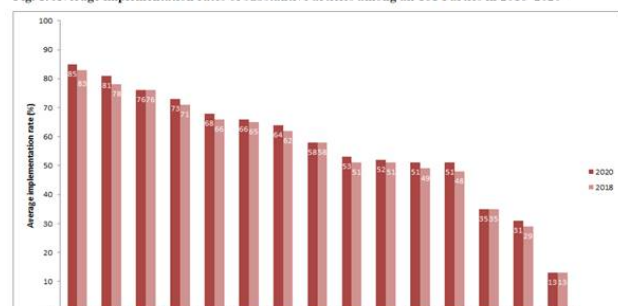
20, MPOWER measures coverage extended to only seven more countries. Nevertheless, an even greater concern is implementing the FCTC articles that vary across regions and countries. The FCTC secretariat reported good progress in the implementation of Article 8 (Smoke free), Article 11 (Packaging and labelling), Article 12 (Communication, training and awareness) and Article 16 (sale to and by minors). Whereas, Article 17 (alternative livelihood), Article 18 (Environment protection) and Article 13 (TAPS) implementation are lagging far behind. The report calls for urgent actions for the Global Strategy indicators under Articles 5 and 6, the time-bound Articles 8, 11 and 13, and Articles 17 and 18.

India has taken exemplary steps in developing tobacco control policies and programmes, i.e. the Cigarette and Other Tobacco Control Act (COTPA), Prohibition of E-Cigarette Act, and National Tobacco Control Programme. Despite that DSRs,

tobacco advertising allowance at the point of sales, and a few contradicting departmental policies undermine its intended protection. Tobacco Industry exploits these gaps to normalise and promote tobacco use. Therefore, India needs to prioritise removing DSR and TAPS exceptions, banning characterising flavours/additives and prohibiting indirect advertisements along with other progressive measures like track and trace system to limit illicit trade.

It is also essential, especially for the parties like India, to adopt the Whole-of-Government Approach aligned with FCTC Article 5.3 policy to protect its tobacco control progress from the tobacco industry and its allies.

Fig. 1. Average implementation rates of substantive articles among all 181 Parties in 2018–2020*



The global progress and developments in India on the implementation of Articles 9 and 10 of the WHO FCTC

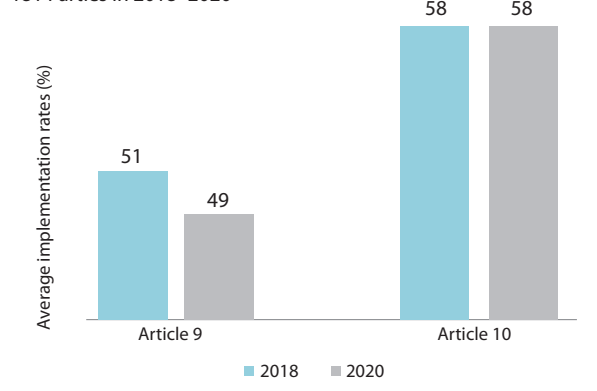
Prof Sonu Goel, Professor of Health Management, School of Public Health, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh-160012, India | Adjunct Associate Clinical Professor in the School of Medicine, Faculty of Education & Health Sciences, University of Limerick | Vice-Chair Tobacco Control, The Union | Director, e-Resource Centre for Tobacco Control



Articles 9 and 10 of FCTC– which calls for the regulation of contents and disclosures of tobacco products, including water-pipe, smokeless tobacco and heated tobacco products (HTPs) –is a valuable tool that complements other tried and tested tobacco control measures to drive down the demand for tobacco. WHO

“No Tobacco Unit” works on the implementation of Article 9 & 10 of FCTC with support from other technical teams comprising of the WHO Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation (TobReg); the WHO Tobacco Laboratory Network (TobLabNet); WHO collaborating centres; and independent experts. The primary work includes identifying the existing standardized methods for the determination of contents and emissions of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and/or electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENNDS) and gather evidence from WHO TobLabNet member laboratories on the methods being used in their laboratories to determine the contents and emissions of ENDS and ENNDS. Following it, TobReg proposed a priority list of toxic contents and emissions of tobacco products. Despite the WHO initiatives in recent years, only around half of all 181

Fig. 1. Average implementation rates of Article 9 & 10 among all 181 Parties in 2018–2020



Parties regulate, test or measure the contents and the emissions of tobacco products. However, banning characterizing flavors or additives in tobacco products have been supported by majority and over two thirds of Parties require the disclosure of information on the contents of tobacco products to government authorities, but fewer Parties (61%) require the same for the emissions of products. Public disclosure, especially in relation to emissions, remains uncommon.



COP AND MOP

Keeping pace with the aforementioned global developments, Government of India in September, 2019 granted recognition to three testing laboratories for the purposes of testing the nicotine and tar contents in cigarettes and any other tobacco product. These laboratories are the National Tobacco Testing Laboratory at National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research, Noida, Uttar Pradesh; the National Tobacco Testing Laboratory at Central Drugs

Testing Laboratory, Mumbai and the National Tobacco Testing Laboratory at Regional Drugs Testing Laboratory, Guwahati, Assam. Apart from testing tobacco samples for nicotine, these laboratories also aims to undertake relevant research and generate scientific data on products' constituents and explore ways of safe disposal of tobacco related wastes.

Research and evidence on novel and emerging tobacco products

Dr Shivam Kapoor, Technical Adviser (STOP), The Union South East Asia Office, New Delhi, India



According to the 2021 WHO report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, which covered the year ending 31 December 2020, 32 countries had banned the sale of ENDS, while 79 adopted one or more legislative measures. Whereas 11 countries had banned the sale of HTPs, while 48 specifically regulated HTPs in one form or another.

On 18 September 2019, India addressed the rapidly changing nature of novel tobacco products and promulgated a nationwide Ordinance (Prohibition of E-cigarettes Ordinance 2019) that prohibits the production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement of all forms of ENDS/ENNDS, consisting e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, e-hookah and similar devices. On 5 December 2019, both houses of Parliament of India passed the Prohibition of E-cigarettes Act 2019 (PECA-2019), replacing and, thus, repealing the Ordinance. The law punishes first-time violation with a maximum of one-year imprisonment or fine of Rs. 100000/- (about 1300 US\$) or with both.

Despite a nationwide ban, multi state-level survey showed that

ENDS/ENNDS was still available at retailer storefronts within major cities in India. Research has also highlighted that these novel and emerging products are highly available and accessible through online sales.

On 16 June, 2021, a National Consultation on Enforcement of ENDS ban in India called for stricter compliance with PECA-2019 by all stakeholders at all levels, especially indirect and deceitful violation of the law e.g. advertising, sale and promotion, especially through internet and social media.

National Consultation on Enforcement of ENDS ban in India

Guests of Honour

- Dr P. C. Gupta, Director, Health - South-East Institute of Public Health, New Mumbai
- Dr Jyoti Kaur, Regional Advisor, Tobacco Free Initiative, WHO SEARO, New Delhi
- Dr Pradeep Khanna, ASST. DDO, Muzaffar, Govt of India

Panellists

- Mr Praveen Lal, Senior Technical Advisor, The Union, SEA Office, New Delhi
- Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, Deputy Technical Officer for Cancer Epidemiology, Tata Memorial
- Dr Ashok R. Patel, Professor of ICM, AIISH, Bangalore
- Capt. Anoop Singh, Punjab Police
- Mr Ranjith Singh, Legal Advisor, Supreme Court of India
- Dr Amit Talwar, Senior Technical Advisor, The Union, SEA Office, New Delhi

Organisers

- Dr Ramesh Singh, Deputy Regional Director, The Union, SEA Office, New Delhi, India
- Dr Rakesh Gupta, President and Director of Public Health, Strategy Institute for Public Health Education and Research, Chandigarh
- Dr Soma Gupt, Professor, Department of Community Medicine & School of Public Health, PGIIMER, Chandigarh
- Mr Arun Verma, Director, Finance and Operation SIPHER

Organized by Strategic Institute of Public Health Education and Research (SIPHER) in collaboration with E-Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (E-RCTC) under Department of Community Medicine & School of Public Health, PGIIMER Chandigarh and The Union South-East Asia (The Union)

The Implementation Review Mechanism – Processes and way forward

Dr Rana J Singh, Deputy Regional Director, The Union, South East Asia Office, New Delhi, India



Based on the recommendations of the Expert Group on reporting mechanism an Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM) under the WHO FCTC was considered important to improve implementation of the Convention. At the 8th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) held in Geneva in 2018, decision was taken to conduct a pilot

project exercise for the IRM with voluntary participation of 12 Parties. In the last two years the Convention Secretariat conducted the review following a process outlined by the Expert Group and the Implementation Review Committee. Two Parties from the six WHO Regions participated in the pilot project for IRM.

Implementation reviews suggest that there is wide variation of implementation among Parties. Key provisions of the Treaty that were time-bound were accomplished the most.

Several Parties fully implemented Articles 8, 11 and 13, Articles 14, 15 and 16 were also reported to be full or almost full compliance. However, gaps in implementing Article 5.3 was most common while none of the Parties in the pilot exercise fully implemented Article 6.

Desk review for IRM was highly useful, however, it was observed that obtaining even the regular implementation reports could be a challenge. Like all other things, IRM process was highly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was suggested that IRM should be renamed as "Implementation Review and Support Mechanism" (IRSM) with the key aim to "promote and facilitate mutual assistance and cooperation among the Parties that is intended to be objective, transparent and cost-effective." The report from the pilot exercise provides consistent process and a template structure for review of the Treaty implementation by individual Parties (Fig-1).



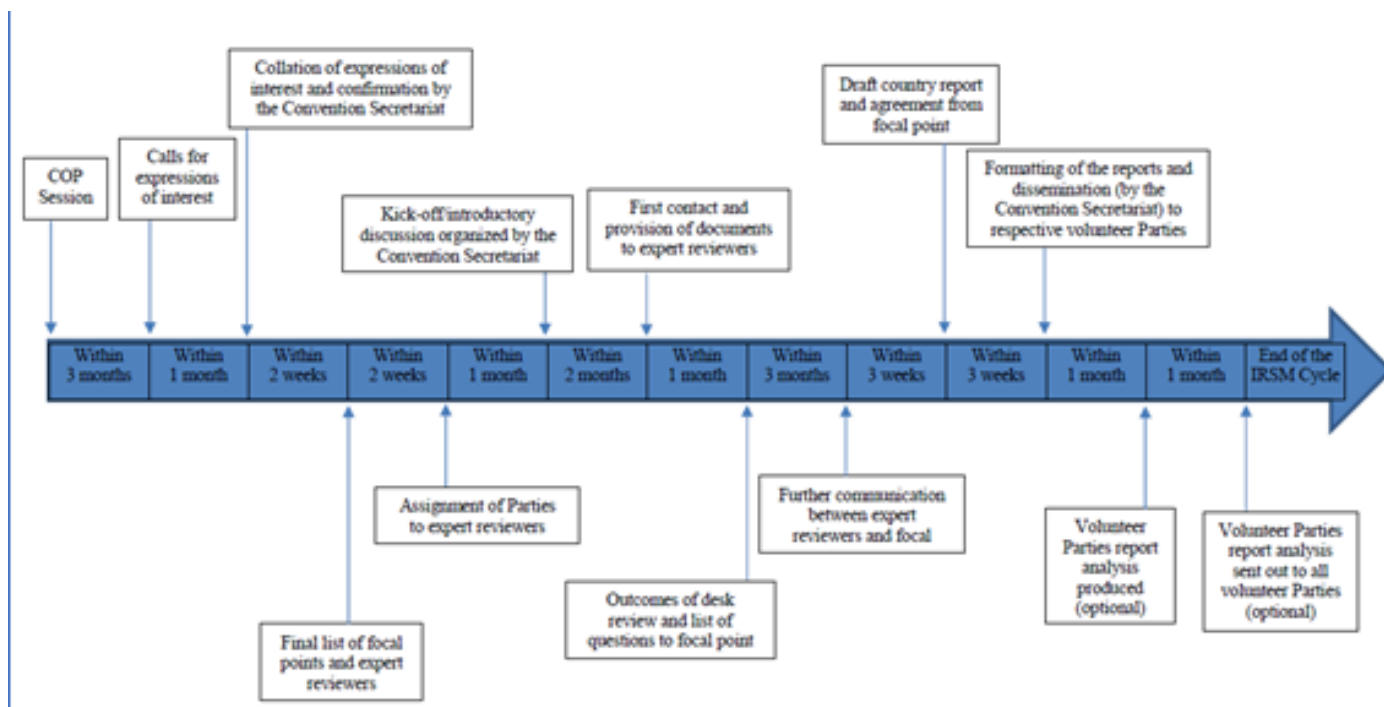


Fig-1: Model schedule for IRSM and guidelines

All Parties should support, adopt and undertake IRSM to not only measure the progress in Treaty implementation but also meeting their reporting requirements under the Treaty.

National and Global priorities for tobacco control in the next two years

Dr Prashant Kumar Singh, Scientist 'D', Division of Preventive Oncology & Population Health and Nodal Officer, WHO Global Knowledge Hub on Smokeless Tobacco, ICMR – National Institute of Cancer Prevention & Research (NICPR), Noida, India



The forthcoming meeting for the Ninth Session of COP of the WHO FCTC and the Second Session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products (ITP) creates a global opportunity to provide valuable insights on the varied crucial issues related to tobacco control globally and in India. Some of the priorities proposed for next two years

for us include providing technical assistance to parties, role of knowledge hubs providing assistance to parties in implementing COP decisions and identification of research gaps and tobacco industry monitoring.

We, at WHO FCTC Global Knowledge Hub on Smokeless Tobacco (KH-SLT), ICMR-National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research, Noida underscore the necessity to provide technical assistance to the Parties with high prevalence of SLT in terms of sensitization of the government officials and public health experts on tobacco use and its adverse health effects. We envision development of comprehensive tobacco control measures applicable and acceptable in the socio-cultural and local context

with focus on the region and in particular India which hosts nearly 70% of the global SLT users. In order to achieve the proposed work plan for 2022-23, awareness regarding the COP decisions is crucial wherein all the Knowledge hubs shall coordinate in terms of training and technological support for various tobacco control measures.

The 'Health for All' goal could not be achieved until the high risk population groups such as pregnant and/or lactating women, migrants and displace population remains at the risk of tobacco use and related NCDs. Thus, the identification of global strategic research gaps in tobacco epidemiology, prevention and cessation remains a key priority for us. One of the important aspects of tobacco control is to address the influence of tobacco industries across multiple sectors and work towards meeting the mandates of Article 5.3 of the Convention. A dedicated National Multiagency Monitoring Group could be formed to assess the tobacco industry interferences in public policies including public health and reverse brand stretching and related surrogate advertising. One of the means to address this collectively should include national and regional workshops for building capacity and influence decision making of various stakeholders including research institutions, health professional bodies and various government departments.



Investment proposal for implementation of the WHO FCTC and the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products

Mr Pranay Lal, Senior Technical Adviser, The Union South East Asia Office, New Delhi, India



To govern illicit trade protocol, raise normative and operational conflicts across licensure of manufacturing unit, cross-border and domestic intellectual property protection, and coordinated activity to combat legal and illicit trade, as well as transnational organized crime.

Globally WHO FCTC need to learn lessons from WHO's experience from counterfeit medicines governance without adopting its inefficiencies. Closing the resource gap will require action on multiple fronts. Domestic resource mobilization will have an important role to play. Increasing tobacco taxes presents a 'win-win' opportunity, raising revenue for health spending while reducing consumption. In India, 2% CSR taxation from tobacco sector can be used to advance tobacco control and specifically ensure compliance to provisions of the Protocol. Globally, WHO can adopt advanced market commitment models or levy from luxury goods (like those developed from UNITAID for HIV/AIDS). For innovative financing to take off requires leadership at global and national level.

India's progress towards implementing the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products

India assumed a leadership position towards the adoption of ITP in 2018. The Government of India has conducted several

ministerial discussions to find current gaps and steps need to comply with FCTC prescribed good practices and ITP commitments and guidelines. The Government of India has identified y Central Board of Indirect taxes and Customs (CBIC) as the lead agency in the current discussions on ITP. CBIC and the Directorate General of Revenue Intelligence (DGRI) are mandated to keep a constant vigil on the illicit trade of tobacco, especially across borders. CBIC and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has will work closely to comply with provisions of Article 15 WHO FCTC and Section 7 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003. In addition, there are several corrections that are required internally before India can accede towards compliance to ITP and FCTC provisions. Among these is strict licensure and registration of manufacturing units, and ensuring stadardization of tobacco packages. Some challenges are being addressed in states like banning prohibiting sale of loose cigarettes, which has been done in 17 states.

MOHFW has also requested for guidelines from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for safe disposal of tobacco products ahead of its compliance towards the protocol. In addition, two Government of India delegations have visited Uganda and Kenya, and the EU states to understand experience on T&T. The learnings from the experience from LMICs and EU suggests it is possible to maintain high prices while lowering illicit trade using approaches like prominent tax stamps, local-language warnings on cigarette packs, as well as enforcing penalties. India however must remain cautious of adopting the EU model as there are concerns of tobacco industry influence and manipulation.

Greater participation of NGOs key to COP and MOP functioning

Ms Opinder Preet Kaur Gill and Dr Aastha Bagga



Opinder Preet Kaur Gill



Dr Aastha Bagga

Non-Government Organisations play a pivotal role in tobacco control. Through their capacity building efforts, they not only sensitise stakeholders promoting better understanding of

tobacco control issues and practices but also accelerate the implementation of tobacco control laws and policies. They have been instrumental in supporting the government in advancing tobacco control. NGOs have been working relentlessly on the ground and providing critical services for tobacco cessation and helping tobacco users to quit.

Realizing the gravitas of the situation, they were the first to

reconfigure themselves and pushed for new initiatives like tobacco smoke free cities, tobacco free educational institutes, tobacco free villages and other tobacco free jurisdictions. Combating tobacco industry interference, engaging youth in tobacco control activities, issuing courtesy notices to violating tobacco vendors are some of the key initiatives undertaken by NGOs that were later substantiated and institutionalised by governments.

Besides this NGOs have played an important role in developing national and international cooperation which has stimulated tobacco control globally, regionally and locally. Undoubtedly, greater participation of NGOs is definitely a key to further strengthen the COP and MOP functioning and in advancing tobacco control while contributing in the compliance with the Treaty and Protocol obligations.

Track and Trace mechanism through lens of Tobacco Vendor Licensing

Dr Nidhi Sejpal Pauranik, Senior Technical Adviser, The Union South East Asia Office, New Delhi, India



Illicit tobacco makes cigarettes cheaper, or more accessible, resulting in more people smoking, which in turn has negative health consequences and associated higher healthcare costs. A tracking and tracing system for tobacco products is a system which enables monitoring in real time, the movement of tobacco products throughout all stages of the supply chain — from

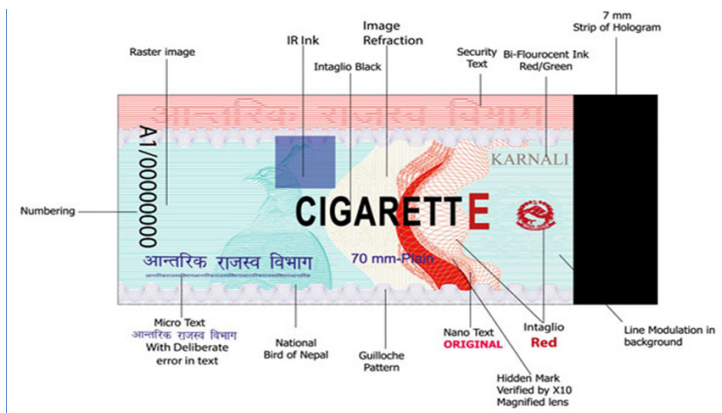
production or import sites to retail outlets — and for identifying where illicit activity has occurred.

Experts agree that the single most effective solution to countering illicit tobacco is to better control the supply chain. Through measures like Tobacco Vendor Licensing (national advisory by MoHFW on 21st Sept 2017 urging states to adopt Tobacco Vendor Licensing through local municipal authorities), local governments can maintain an inventory of all the businesses that are selling tobacco, including the different kinds of businesses that sell tobacco and where they are located relative to schools, youth-populated areas, and each other.

Through specific terms and conditions, tobacco licensed vendors can be mandated to sell only those tobacco products that are marked with a unique identifier (e.g. tax stamp that are unique, secure and non-removable with an array of features such as holograms, florescent ink, and ultra violet fibres, etc. as in fig below), so they can be monitored at each step of the process from the point of production up to the point of sale, creating a time and location history for every step. More so, wholesalers

and retailers can be mandated by the government to provide detailed information on their products, including source and destination. Stamps including a serial number that provides information on the duty paid, producer, importer, product details, and volume, can be linked to a data management system located at the government local/municipal offices. The local government/municipal officers can check the authenticity of cigarettes/tobacco products sold in licensed retail shops during enforcement drives. Failure to comply, can be subjected to a high and prohibitive penalty.

Therefore, in summary, while the introduction of a track and trace regime for tobacco products through tobacco vendor licensing is a critical component to secure the supply chain, it also an apt measure by the government to take necessary measures to prevent diversion of tobacco into illicit channels.



Assistance and Cooperation to strengthen implementation of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products

Dr Upendra Bhojani, Director, Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.



I recently had a call with a friend from Bangladesh working in tobacco control. Soon, we ended up discussing how it is important to study certain aspects of financing and supply chains of tobacco companies in the region to better understand potential tax avoidance strategies by some companies. And, how this would require close cooperation among

tobacco control researchers/advocates across the countries in the region.

This relates to an agenda item called “Assistance and Cooperation” that the MOP to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products aims to discuss in its second session happening from 15-18 November 2021. The MOP had established a Working Group to make suggestions on how some of the Articles (21; 23; 24; 28; 29) of the Protocol that deals with sharing of information and achieving administrative and legal assistance across countries could be optimally implemented. The Group was also tasked to document and suggest good practices concerning the prevention of illicit trade of tobacco in/through free zones and international transit (Article 12).

The Group tabled a report highlighting the need to detail various aspects of these Articles to guide their implementation. The report emphasizes the importance of regional approach while highlighting (i) several existing platforms that can be used for sharing enforcement-related information across countries; (ii) list of organizations and agreements that can be optimized to enhance mutual legal assistance across countries; and (iii) issues that require detailing by parties to enhance administrative and legal assistance across countries in preventing the illicit trade in tobacco. There is a DARFT decision for MOP to consider wherein parties are requested to designate contact points and national authorities/agencies for mutual administrative and legal assistance and consider (or build upon) suggestions in the working group report for enhancing measures for free zones and international transit. The draft decision requests the Convention Secretariat to act as a facilitator of cooperation and exchange of good practices/assistance across parties, and as a reservoir for needed information (on designated agencies, etc.). It also suggests the Secretariat engage with and invite important international agencies (like World Customs Organization; International Criminal Police Organization) to become observers and engage with the Protocol implementation processes.



Preventing Tobacco Industry Interference is a Must – Declaration of interest for Members of the Bureau and Regional Coordinators for the Meeting of the Parties

The importance of preventing tobacco industry interference in public policymaking and implementation as a crucial measure for effective tobacco control is widely acknowledged. Article 5.3 and the relevant guidelines of the WHO FCTC provide measures to do so.

It is keeping with this logic that the MOP in its very first session, adopted the Code of Conduct and the Declaration of Interest form for the members of the Bureau and Regional Coordinators, people who play a crucial role during intersession period supporting the MOP processes. The Code of Conduct, apart from providing guiding principles and duties of the Bureau members and Regional Coordinators, defines what constitutes conflicts of interest and requires them to sign a Declaration of Interest form ensuring there is no conflict of interests. This Code of Conduct requires members not to participate in/support/endorse any partnership/policy proposals by the tobacco industry and not to demand/accept any contributions from the tobacco industry. It also demands members to not engage in any relationship with

the tobacco industry after the end of their tenure with the Bureau and certainly not so within 24 months of the end of their tenure with the Bureau.

This time the Convention Secretariat (on request of the Bureau) has proposed certain amendments to the Declaration of Interest form (i) adding the word “exportation” while defining tobacco industry to include entities engaged in the exportation of tobacco products; and (ii) removing the word “health” to now make it “public policies with respect to tobacco control” ensuring that the Protocol requires the implementation of public policies beyond those that are purely related to health. The DRAFT decision requests parties to adopt these amendments and continue to remain vigilant while nominating Bureau members keeping in consideration Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC. This issue of preventing Conflict of Interest and tobacco industry interference is crucial to our region given many countries in the region are engaged in tobacco production and trade. India has supported similar actions in past at the WHO FCTC COP and MOP and has recently put in place a Code of Conduct for officials of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. So, it is desired and very likely that India will support this decision while enhancing Article 5.3 measures at the national level.

Financial resources and mechanisms of assistance to support implementation of the ITP

Dr Amit Yadav, Senior Technical Adviser, The Union South East Asia Office, New Delhi, India



The MOP2 will consider this report that describes the proposed Strategy for Mechanisms of Assistance and Mobilization of Financial Resources to Support Implementation of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. This report looked at the technical and financial support, capacity-building and technical resources needed by the Parties to implement the ITP. The report on the subject by the Convention Secretariat outlines that the Parties identified the need for assistance in understanding the Protocol, specialised technical assistance to build domestic capacities, assistance in generating initial start-up resources and match needs with the priorities. It further, impresses upon conducting joint needs assessment, offering investment cases, developing toolkits and facilitating South–South and Triangular cooperation.

A comprehensive Strategy for Mechanisms of Assistance and Mobilization of Financial Resources to Support Implementation of the ITP has been presented for consideration of the Parties at MOP2 with following key components.

It will be important for both developed and developing countries to adopt the suggested strategies and undertake the recommended needs assessment as the first step moving forward in the similar manner in implementing the WHO FCTC. Moving forward, India should not only take stock of its preparedness to implement the ITP but also support other countries in the region to Ratify and thereafter implement the Protocol.

Priorities for the implementation of the ITP

While governments and non-government stakeholders prepare for the MOP2, they must look at the priorities for further advancing and implementing the ITP that will decide where the Parties intend to spend their funds available for tobacco control. Given that Parties have already indicated need for technical resources and capacity building, it is important to prioritise the needs assessment exercise and development of focused action plans for early adoption and implementation of the ITP. For the same, regional or sub regional training workshops needs to be prioritised as suggested in the workplan for next two years.

Other priorities that focus on advancing and implementing the Protocol inter alia include:

- Interim solution of the Global Information-sharing Focal Point
- Establish and operate an online platform to facilitate the dissemination and exchange of information
- Develop and disseminate technical publications on ITP
- Organize multi-sectoral workshops to address challenges in the implementation of the Protocol
- High level meetings to garner political support for the ratification and implementation of the Protocol
- Implementation of national/regional tracking and tracing systems in LMICs and LDCs
- Develop social communication materials on the importance of the Protocol
- Engage and encourage participation of relevant IGOs and NGOs by inviting them to become observers to the MOP
- Impact of implementation of the Protocol to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Parties must, therefore, at the global, national and local level work towards meeting the objectives of the ITP and prevent all avenues of illicit trade in tobacco products while prioritising the above action areas.



Fig-1: Components of the Strategy





Jharkhand to act against tobacco use by minors

In a bid to completely eradicate the use of tobacco products by minors, a bill has been introduced in the Jharkhand Assembly to increase the minimum age for tobacco consumption or any involvement of a person in tobacco related trade 18 years to 21 years. According to the Health Minister, Sh. Banna Gupta, such laws will prove to be a deterrent for minors and keep them away from the deadly addiction of tobacco in Jharkhand and the centre must also follow similar steps in a bid to control the use of tobacco.

Third of India's cancer cases linked to tobacco use, nearly half in people over 60: ICMR report

As much as a third of the cancer cases reported in India is linked to tobacco use, according to the latest report released by the ICMR-National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research. Cancers associated with tobacco use comprised 48.7 per cent of all cancers among males and 16.5 per cent among females. The report also stated that the average age of initiation of tobacco use is 21 years, which is a contributory factor to the increased burden of cancers associated with tobacco use in India. ICMR report states that tobacco-linked cancer cases are expected to make up 27.2% of India's total projected cancer cases in 2025.

Haryana extends ban on sale, manufacture of gutkha, pan masala till September 2022

Haryana government has extended the ban on the sale and manufacture of gutkha and pan masala for one year. The state Food and Drugs Administration has issued a notification in this regard, under which the sale and purchase of tobacco products have been prohibited for a year from Sept 7, 2021. The order has been issued to all the district magistrates and superintendent of police, food inspectors and others. Now, the sale of tobacco and nicotine products like pan masala and gutkha in Haryana will be considered illegal till September 2022.



Pledge on ToFEI Guidelines at Abdullah School: Aligarh

In a bid to boost implementation of tobacco control initiatives among adolescents, a pledge was administered at the Abdullah School of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) under the 'Tobacco-free Educational Institutions' (ToFEI) guidelines of the Union Health Ministry to ensure that no tobacco product is sold inside the premises of educational institutions and in an area within 100 yards.



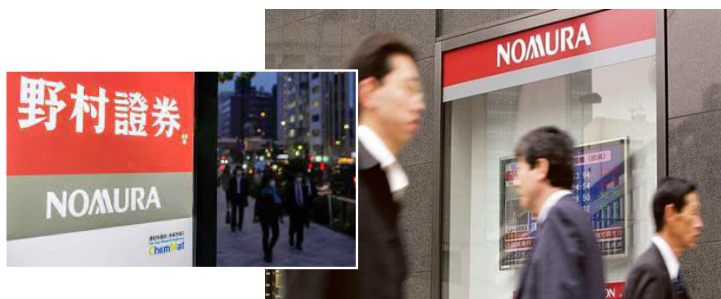
Taskforce to ensure Deoghar as first tobacco-free district in Jharkhand

Babadham (Deoghar) is on its way to be the first district in Jharkhand to be completely tobacco-free. In order to achieve this milestone, the district administration on Thursday launched a campaign for implementing Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) 2003 strictly in Babadham and taking action against the violators.



Nomura to shut down all smoking rooms: Japan

The country's biggest brokerage sent a memo to employees outlining the new policy that will come into effect in October. The company will close all smoking rooms that are managed by the Nomura Group by the end of December to create a favorable working environment, prevent secondhand smoking and promote employee health.



Unlicensed shops selling tobacco to face action: Bihar

With a view to tighten the noose around unlicensed shops selling cigarettes, the Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC) will take legal action against the stockists, wholesalers, and retailers and impose a fine of up to Rs 5,000 on them. The civic body will also take strict action against those who use and sell tobacco openly for violation of the norms under the Bihar Municipal Act, 2007.



Prohibition on herbal hookahs: Delhi HC tells police to not unnecessarily harass eateries

The Delhi High Court directed the Delhi Police not to unnecessarily harass or park vehicles outside eateries that offer herbal flavoured hookahs and directed the Delhi government to reconsider its decision on continuation of the prohibition on the use of the hookahs at public places.



Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health (COSH) welcomed the passage of the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2019



Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health (COSH) welcomed the passage of the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2019 (the Bill) by the Legislative Council (LegCo) today (21 October), to prohibit the import, manufacture, sale, distribution and advertisement of alternative smoking products (ASPs) including electronic cigarettes, heated tobacco products and herbal cigarettes which could eradicate tobacco epidemic in forms of ASPs in Hong Kong.

Substance use disorder may up risk of Covid breakthrough infections

According to the researchers at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health, and Case Western Reserve University the risk of Covid breakthrough infection was higher among people with substance use disorders than those without. People with substance use disorders, such as alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, opioid, and tobacco use disorders, had also elevated rates of severe outcomes, including hospitalization and death, following breakthrough infections. It could be because substance use disorders make the immune system weak due to drug use and co-occurring diseases.



Expert group under health ministry to review taxation on tobacco products

The Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare has set up an expert panel to review the taxation policy for tobacco products and will develop a proposal for comprehensive tax policy for tobacco products with a public health perspective. It will analyse the existing tax structure for all forms of tobacco (smoking and smokeless) and then develop a roadmap for tobacco tax policy and recommend immediate steps to be taken for making India MPOWER compliant.



World Heart Federation Calls for Strict Regulation of E-Cigarettes

The World Heart Federation (WHF) is calling on governments to implement strict regulations on e-cigarettes in a determined effort to stop the e-cigarette epidemic in its tracks. The WHF Policy Brief, E-Cigarettes: A New Threat to Cardiovascular Health, explores the available evidence regarding the negative health impacts of smoking e-cigarettes and highlights the need for stricter regulation and greater oversight of e-cigarette sales and marketing, particularly when it comes to young people.



Send us your feedback, comments and suggestions at rctcupdates@gmail.com,

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