

Report

on

**Webinar on
“Tobacco Free Generation-
A role of Educational Institutions”**

Date: 14th August, 2020



Organized by:
**RESOURCE CENTRE FOR TOBACCO CONTROL (E-RCTC)
& NEIGRIHMS, Shillong**

with support from
**Department of Health & Family Welfare and
Directorate of School Education & Literacy,
Government of Meghalaya**

In collaboration with
**The International Union Against Tuberculosis
and Lung Disease (The UNION)**

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of
Webinar on “Tobacco Free Generation- A role of Educational Institutions”

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Background:

Tobacco has been identified as the foremost cause of death and disease that is entirely preventable. As per WHO, if current trends continue, by 2030 tobacco use will kill more than 8 million people worldwide each year. It is estimated that 80 % of these premature deaths will occur among people living in low - and middle - income countries. Over the course of the 21st century, tobacco use could kill a billion people or more unless urgent action is taken. As per the report of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), nearly 50% of cancers in males and 25% cancers in females in India are directly attributed to tobacco use. In India nearly 9 lakhs people are dying every year due to tobacco related disease. In Meghalaya the prevalence of tobacco use is 47% of all forms of tobacco. Among the users, 59.8 % were male and 34.2 % were female. Meghalaya is ranked 2nd in the Country at 31.6% in Smoking next to Mizoram and 15th in the Country for Smokeless forms at 20.3%. Among persons aged 15-17years, the prevalence of tobacco use is 12.6% and the mean age at initiation of tobacco use is 17.5years. (GATS 2016-2017).

Further, tobacco use is a major risk factor for the four main Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) - cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic lung disease and diabetes, placing people with these conditions at higher risk for developing severe illness when affected by COVID-19. NCDs are estimated to account for 63 per cent of all deaths in India and these are expected to rise further.

It has been learned that most of the tobacco users initiate during their adolescent and youth period, and such behaviour driven practice results to such addiction. Furthermore, early the initiation of tobacco products less likely to quit. Hence, realising the above-mentioned health implications of tobacco users, it is better to stop initiation at early ages for a tobacco free future generation and well-being of people.

NEIGRIHMS, Shillong has partnered with Government of Meghalaya in “Advancing tobacco control through capacity building, enforcement of COTPA, MPOWER implementation and support to National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP)”. Taking the partnership forward and with the above background, NEIGRIHMS, Shillong and Resource Centre for Tobacco Control, PGIMER, Chandigarh with support from Health & Family Welfare and Directorate of School Education & Literacy, Government of Meghalaya, and The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The UNION) have organised a webinar through virtual platform on the topic “Tobacco Free Generation - A role of Educational Institutions” on 14th August, 2020.

The objectives of the webinar were:

- To sensitize Principals, Teachers and members of the National Service Scheme (NSS) on impact of tobacco on children.
- To orient them on Tobacco - Free Institution Policy.
- To make Educational Institutions in Meghalaya as “Tobacco Free Institutions”.

Participants of the webinar:

The participants of the webinar were Staff from the Department of School Education & Literacy, School Principals, Teachers and members from the School Management Committee, members of the National Service Scheme (NSS) Unit of Meghalaya (Program Coordinators, Program Officers and Student Volunteers), and other policy makers of respective institutions.

Proceedings of the webinar:

The introductory session of the webinar started with a welcome and introduction to the tobacco control project by Dr. Star Pala, Associate Professor, Dept. of Community Medicine, NEIGRIHMS, Shillong, who is leading the tobacco control project for Meghalaya partner. Followed by a briefing from Dr. Rana J Singh, Deputy Regional Director (Tobacco and NCD Control), The UNION, New Delhi, who was the Guest of Honour of the webinar. He highlighted some of the major key achievements of Meghalaya in curbing the tobacco use in the state. Shri. Ambrose Ch. Marak, Director, School Education & Literacy, Govt. of Meghalaya, who was the Chief Guest of the webinar, briefed the participants about the statistics of Tobacco use in

Meghalaya. He also emphasized on the need of Tobacco-Free Generation as the state of Meghalaya has been facing tremendous pressure on abuse of tobacco specially among school children and among college students.

Subsequently, the webinar progressed with the scheduled technical sessions on various themes under 'Tobacco Free Educational Institutions' (TFEI). The sessions were moderated by Mr. Rajeev Choudhary, Project Coordinator, PGIMER Chandigarh. Several key topics were shared by different resource person that stressed upon the role of educational institutions to combat the magnitude of tobacco consumption in the state of Meghalaya. Dr. Star Pala, Associate Professor Dept. of Community Medicine, NEIGHRIMS presented on Tobacco Burden in Meghalaya and harmful effect of tobacco which projected about the various health implications of tobacco usage. According to him, tobacco has been identified as the foremost cause of death and disease that is entirely preventable. In Meghalaya, the prevalence of tobacco use is 47% of all forms of tobacco. Among the users, 59.8 % were male and 34.2 % were female. Meghalaya is ranked 2nd in the Country at 31.6% in Smoking next to Mizoram and 15th in the Country for Smokeless forms at 20.3%. Among persons aged 15-17years, the prevalence of tobacco use is 12.6% and the mean age at initiation of tobacco use is 17.5years. (GATS 2016-17). Dr. Pala had mentioned that tobacco causes not only lungs related problem but many of the reason for the cause of cancer is by and large related to tobacco consumption. Dr. Lana E. Lyngdoh, State Nodal Officer - NTCP presented on introduction to Tobacco Control Legislations (COTPA, 2003) with respect to educational institutions. According to her, selling of tobacco at a distance of 100 meters in the vicinity of schools and colleges is prohibited and banning of sales of tobacco to minors and imposing of strict action against those who are not adhering to the legislation is the need of the hour. Whereas, Dr. Sonu Goel, Professor DCM&SPH, PGIMER, Chandigarh presented on Guidelines for Tobacco Free educational Institutions - A way forward. He talked about the different guidelines of MoH&FW for tobacco control and stressed on the importance of more teacher-student and parents' interaction to raise more awareness on the issue of tobacco. He pointed out also on the role of community participation and collective effort of all concern stakeholders to tackle the menace.

The webinar ended with a vote of thanks by Mr. Rajeev Choudhary, Project Coordinator, PGIMER Chandigarh, who honoured the presence of eminent dignitaries and applauded their work towards achieving a tobacco-free generation.