

“Tobacco - a threat to development”. Solution: PHW implementation & Tax raise

Roundtable workshop Report

(30 May,2017)

Activity: A round table workshop on the occasion of ‘No Tobacco Day 30May’

Workshop title: “Tobacco - a threat to development.” Solution; PHW implementation& Tax raise.

Aim of workshop: This activity is to support and encourage the people say no to tobacco, protect health, reduce poverty and promote development.

Purpose of workshop: Tobacco Threatens Us All. Tobacco kills more than 7 million people every year. Ban smoking and Tobacco use in public places, workplaces and public transportation including home and private car. Complete ban in Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship (TAPS). Implementation of Pictorial Health Warning and Tobacco tax increases are the single most effective policy to reduce tobacco use.

Attended personnel’s: Dr. Om Murti Anil (Senior, Interventional Cardiologist), Mr. Khagraj Adhikari (Former Health Minister), Hon. Ranju Jha Thakur(Chairperson, Parliamentary Committee on Women, Children, Senior Citizen and Social Welfare), Badri Bahadur Khadka (NHEICC, MOH), Health Journalists and different media houses, Mr. Anand Bahadur Chand (Chairman/ Action Nepal), Mr. Ram Prasad Neupane (Chief Editor of Nepali Health), and Dr. Khusbu Singh (People’s Dental College and Hospital)

Venue: Indreni Banquate, New Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

Time: 12:00 Noon

Organized by: Action Nepal, Nepalihealth.com & People’s Dental College and Hospital

Agenda sharing: Round Table Talk, Speech and ppt. Presentation.

Statement of problem: Current situation of Nepal:

Tobacco users: Male – 51.9 %, Female – 13 %

Death rate: 68 people/day & yearly 25,000 people

Global death rate: 7 million peoples

Health Problem: 15,000 people suffered health problems/die due to tobacco related diseases every year.

Effects of 90% PHW: Person who consumed 11 cigarettes per day earlier had scared after seeing PHW and started to consume only 5 cigarettes.

Situation of graphic health warning around the globe:

Nepal – 90%(Not implemented), Australia – 90%, Pakistan – 85%, India – 85%, Thailand – 85%, Uruguay – 80%, Sri-lanka – 80%, Brunei – 75%, Bhutan – tobacco free country, Bangladesh – 50%

Legal provision – Nepal:

Directive for printing and labeling of warning message and picture on box, packet, wrappers, carton, parcel and packaging of tobacco products – 2014. (New Directive – 90% graphic health warning)

Importance of PHW on tobacco products:

- Messages are more reliable by pictures representation technique.
- Graphic representation is the best method proven to warn about the danger of tobacco.
- Country like – Nepal, it is the most appropriate tool to save the lives of people due to illiteracy.
- Rotation of pictures may recall the danger to users.
- Help to stay quit to ex-smokers.
- Discourage the new users.
- Help to quit the current smokers.

Tobacco industries tactic:

The tobacco industry targets women by implying tobacco enhances gender equality, glamour, sociability and success. Tobacco industries try to launch their product by mentioning mild, menthol, polar ice, low tar, sponsorship, scholarship, purse, court, political influence etc.

Past experience:

Constitutional assembly has passed the tobacco Act 2000 but Health Minister was unwilling to do that, we Action Nepal have convinced the editor of Naya Patrika national daily to ink for tobacco campaign.

- Naya Patrika and other media houses pain staking effort results the new directives get approved.
- Govt. of Nepal started to monitor the tobacco products in market to ensure the PHW after the two years of tobacco products control and regulatory act 2010, only after the media and public pressure. Minister for Health and Population led team went in market for monitoring accompanied with other government officials along with media.

Responsible agencies of the problem in delaying the new directives:

- Ministry of Health and Population
- Ministry of Industry
- Ministry of Finance
- Inland Revenue Department
- Custom Department
- Home Ministry

Summary and Conclusion:

On the occasion of No Tobacco Day, Action Nepal jointly with Nepalihealth.com and People's Dental College & Hospital have conducted a round table workshop in the Kathmandu with aiming to ensure a 90% Pictorial Health Warning in Nepal and Tax raise. Almost all media houses attended workshop, they were Nepal One TV, Gorkhapatra, Nayapatrika, Radio Sagarmatha, AV News TV, Nepal Samacharpatra, RSS, The Himalayan Times, Swasthya Khabar, Nepalihealth, Kantipur, HEAFON, Sadhana, Hamrodoctor.com, Thahakhabar, Karobar Daily etc.

The roundtable activity was published in different national daily newspapers regarding the risk of tobacco use and the key points of the discussion were poor enforcement of “Tobacco products control and Regulatory Act”. The summary of particular workshop was also broad-casted in various online news and TV channels.

Tobacco consumption not only damages the health of consumers, low-income families also spend money on tobacco which may adversely impact resources for food, health and education. Smoking related diseases result in high productivity costs to the economy because of sick workers and lives lost prematurely. Tobacco control has been wisely included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Tobacco consumption is directly or indirectly interconnected with a majority of SDGs. Though the government amended the Directives for Printing and Labelling of Warning Message and Graphics in the Boxes, Packets, Wrappers, Carton, Parcels and Packaging of tobacco products before 21 months, some tobacco industries are not yet ready to implement 90% Pictorial Health Warning.

Firm political commitment and intersect oral coordination between the government and non-governmental organizations are crucial to implement effective tobacco control programs. The Ministry of Health has formulated effective policies and regulations to bring down tobacco consumption. Mandatory registration of tobacco sellers and a mandatory pictorial health warning (PHW) covering 90 percent of tobacco packaging are some of the recent regulations issued by the Health Ministry. Age restriction for buying and selling tobacco products, ban on advertising and sponsoring tobacco products in the media and ban on smoking in public places are some of the other remarkable steps it has taken.

In the program, the focus point was increasing tax is one of the best measures in tobacco control on tobacco products as it encourages smokers to give up and discourages potential smokers. Governments need to tax all tobacco products in a manner that people do not opt out of one expensive product to a less expensive one. All committee and functional teams present in the program have urged their voice on tax raise on tobacco products should be 70% and 90% Pictorial Health Warning must be implemented soon. The tax rate in Nepal is 28 percent, which is quite low compared to Bangladesh, where it is 76 percent, Sri Lanka 74 percent, Thailand 73 percent, Maldives 66 percent and India 60 percent. So, it is time to think about hiking taxes on tobacco to safeguard public health. Supporting the statement and the world’s first treaty devoted WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), Honorable Ranju Jha Thakur, (Chairperson, Parliamentary Committee on Women, Children, Senior Citizen and Social Welfare), on the behalf of being a member of WHO has emphasized on the need of increasing Tax up to 70% on tobacco products. She added it is very necessary to push the government directives in implementing 90% PHW. Talking is the program, Former Health Minister, Mr. Khag Raj Adhikari expressed in his words though there are many excellent acts and regulations in Nepal; Age restriction for buying and selling tobacco products, ban on advertising and sponsoring tobacco products, restriction on tobacco consumption in public area, restriction among pregnant women for tobacco consumption; but there is lack of progressive implementation. However, Badri Bahadur Khadka, (NHEICC, MOH) said Nepal has excellent acts and regulations and is ahead of many countries in terms of policy formulation on tobacco. Due to some technical delay the problem is the slow pace of implementation but the country can set an excellent example in reducing the prevalence of tobacco use and effectively manages the policies and regulations for preventing the consumption and sale of tobacco products within coming month there must be successful implementation. Dr Om Murti Anil, Senior Interventional Cardiologist said that smoking is the main cause behind cancer and it also causes different non-communicable diseases related to heart and lungs, with heart attack and heart disease being more common among 30-35 years people in Nepal. The main cause for stroke, cholesterol and heart attack is smoking. He warns that two cigarettes are enough for being a cause of heart attack. So, giving prominence to health he said we should not smoke.

Action Nepal Chairperson, Ananda Chand, urged the bodies concerned to strictly enforce and implement the provision of incorporating 90 percent health warning messages and pictures in packets, parcels and wrappers of tobacco products and raise in tax. He added that tobacco tax increase is the single most effective policy to reduce tobacco use. Governments need to tax all tobacco products in a manner that people do not opt out of one expensive product to a less expensive one as well as 90% PHW will scare people and forced them to quit or not to use tobacco. He accused that even the law is perfect but due to industrial pressure functional committee could not prominently step towards tobacco control.