

**Workshop
on
“Advancing Tobacco Control in Nepal”.**

Workshop Report

(20 December, 2017)



Activity: A workshop based on Advancing Tobacco Control in Nepal was successfully conducted.

Workshop title: Workshop on “Advancing Tobacco Control in Nepal”.

Aim of workshop: This activity is to support and encourage concern bodies an urgent need for raising taxes and prices on tobacco products in Nepal.

Venue: Kumari Hall, Hotel Annapurna, Kathmandu

Time: 9:00 AM

Organized by: Jointly organized by Ministry of Health, The Union, Action Nepal and American Cancer Society.

Attended personnel’s: Prof. Dr. Shrikrishna Girir (MoH), Badri Bahadur Khadka (NHEICC- Director), Dr. Lonim Dixit (WHO- NPO), Somnath Gautam (MoPE- S.O), Dr. R. Pant (DoHS- DG), Suresh Bhattarai (Ministry of Commerce- S.O.), Nigar Nargis (American Cancer Society – ACS), Binod D.Lama (NHEICC/Ministry of Health- Advisor), Dr. Tara Singh Bam (Deputy Director, The Union Asia Pacific, Singapore), Bhogendra Raj Dotel (PHC RD, Teku), Nava Raj Khatiwada (Ministry of Education), Devi Prasai (NHEA- vice president), Ananda Bahadur Chand (Action Nepal), Dil Kumari Devkota (Ministry of Education), Sita Devi Thapa (National Planning Commission- Planning Officer), Tika Kadel (HEAFON- Chairperson), Dr. Khurshid A. Hyder (WHO- PHA), Bhola Roka (Ministry of Commerce and Supply- S.O), Dr. Shashi Kadel (NHEICC-MO), Ambika Ghimire (Nursing Association of Treasurer), Suveksha Shrestha (NHEICC), Ava Shrestha (NHEICC- H.E.O.), Gokarna Khadka (NHEICC), Monika Raut (NHEICC- C.O), Dipesh Shrestha (NHEICC- HA), Dr. Radhika Thapaliya (NHEICC- CHEA),

Ramanand Pandit (NEPHA), Raj kumar Khatiwada (IRD Nepal, Director), and health journalists from different media;

Fatima Banu (Kantipur Daily- Reporter), Sabina Khand –thahakhabar.com., Bhagabati Timilsina (NSP-Asst. Editor), Kalpana Poudel (RSS-Reporter), Kalpana Acharya (Health TV), Ram Prasad Neupane (nepalihealth.com), Reecha Aryal (onlinekhabar.com), Sujan Adhikari (NTV), Prabin Dhakal (Swasthya Khabar), Samir Chaudhary (Fox news- editor) etc.

Agenda sharing: Speech and ppt. Presentation along with round table interaction

Statement of problem:

- Tobacco kills approximately 7 million people globally, 1.3 million regionally (Death Rate in Nepal – 68 people / day & yearly 25,0000 people)
- Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) accounted for 60% of the total deaths and approx. 46% of these deaths were caused by: CVDs, Cancer, Chronic lung Diseases and Diabetes. (*WHO Country Profile 2014*).
- Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable deaths and the risk factor common to the above four major NCDs.
- Tobacco use in SEAR and Nepal is alarmingly high as epidemics

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

Importance of raising tax on tobacco products:

Government of Nepal implementing comprehensive tobacco control non-price measure effectively. Current taxation on tobacco products is about 28%, the lowest in South Asia. Ministry of Finance needs to be better prepared to identify alternative sources of revenues to finance local health and development. Local development government as well. Taxation on tobacco products could be one of the potential revenue sources for the government to fund local health program and universal health coverage. The current political environment would also contribute to accelerate tobacco control program in Nepal.

Responsible agencies:

Government Officials from different ministries and departments

- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Industry
- Ministry of Commerce
- Ministry of Health
- Inland Revenue Department
- Custom Department
- National Planning Commission and stakeholders
- Media, Civil Society and responsible organization

Anticipated Outcomes of workshop:

- Have built knowledge and awareness about the need of effective tobacco control.
- Have equipped with national and international evidences of health impact of tobacco use and effectiveness of tobacco taxation to curb the epidemic.
- Have developed policy recommendations for Ministry of Finance to raise taxes and prices on tobacco products.
- Have generated media coverage on taxation.

Summary and Conclusion:

Workshop on, **Advancing Tobacco Control in Nepal** was successfully organized today by Action Nepal jointly with Ministry of Health, The Union, and American Cancer Society with aiming to build political commitment for effective taxes and prices on tobacco products in Nepal. Almost all officials from Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, National Planning Commission, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Supply Management and other government departments attended the program. Health professionals from different organization as well as civil society and journalists from print media, online media, television, radio and social media attended the workshop.

International speaker from The Union, Dr. Tara Singh Bam, Deputy Regional Director said tobacco use is a serious threat to health development at national and global level. It is the highest expenditure among the poor, exceeding education, clothing and health care. So, 2030 SDGs is a new opportunity to start by prioritizing and incorporating tobacco control in every development agenda. That's why WHO Framework Convention of Tobacco Control is an effective tool.

The NHEICC Director, Badri Bahadur Khadka said, intersect oral coordination within the ministries should be improved. There is an urgent need to maximize the tobacco control initiatives by focusing on; increase resources and build technical capacity, media and civil society engagement and conduct tobacco related Morbidity and Mortality study.

Nigar Nargis (American Cancer Society – ACS) mainly addressed her presentation on tobacco taxation. Tobacco taxation is the single most effective tobacco control measure. The relationships are straightforward.

- If you raise tobacco taxes sufficiently, those selling tobacco products will need to increase prices to stay in business.
- When prices increase, they become less affordable.
- When products become less affordable, consumers buy less of them.

Raising tax on a product discourages the consumption of the product through its positive effect on its price. Tobacco, despite being an addictive product, is no exception to that principle. However, it is not as price sensitive as other normal products. As such, it has significant potential to increase revenue in the event of a tax and price increase and reduction in overall consumption.

Tax is a fiscal policy instrument available at the hand of the government of each country primarily to generate revenue that finances government expenditures. In addition, taxes are employed to redistribute income and wealth, to channel resources to desired use, to divert resources from undesirable uses, to protect domestic industries from foreign competition and to stabilize national income through demand

management. Tobacco products are taxed with the objectives of discouraging its consumption and generating revenue. It serves the dual goals of improvement in public health and increase in government revenue.

There is no denying the fact that the non-price tobacco control interventions are very effective in reducing tobacco consumption. As a matter of fact, tobacco taxation can be even more effective in reducing tobacco consumption when implemented within a comprehensive tobacco control program that includes smoke-free laws, packaging and labeling provisions, marketing bans, and cessation programs.

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. Nepal has excellent acts and regulations and is ahead of many countries in terms of policy formulation on tobacco. But the tax rate on tobacco products in Nepal is quite low compared to other countries. So, it is time to think about hiking taxes on tobacco to safeguard public health. Tobacco tax increase is the single most effective policy to reduce tobacco use.

The workshop activity was published in different national daily newspapers regarding an urgent need to raise of tax on tobacco products and their strong commitments.