

Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) to Control Tobacco Economics and the Concerns of Governments about Taxes on Poor Smokers

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Keywords: Tobacco economics, Taxes, Poor smoker.

Abstract: Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death which kills more than 5 million people every year. It is predicted to kill more than 8 million by 2030, and approximately 80% of the deaths will occur in low- and middle-income countries. Not only in health sector, economies will also suffer from increased health-care costs and decreased productivity. For example, while tobacco taxes are known to be the most cost-effective tobacco control measure, some countries encounter several challenges when a tax increase is at stake. As the tax increases, the share of tobacco expenses on the household income also increases, thus increasing the burden on the family budget, especially on poorer smokers. Evidence suggests that the poor are more sensitive to price increases, and consequently, it is expected that as tax increases, the majority will tend to reduce or quit smoking. In order to address the economic arguments used against tobacco control, it is necessary to strengthen the evidence, technical and analytical skills of government officials, academia and civil society. This will help to move forward the tobacco control agenda and to improve both the economy and public health.

1 INTRODUCTION

There are many substantial debates on the economics of tobacco control while the health arguments against it are largely beyond dispute. To reduce tobacco demand it would reduce tax revenues and causes sudden unemployment and increase smuggling. It makes some public health community doubted the efficacy of price interventions. One of the concerns that raised by the governments is the regressive nature of taxes on poor smokers. As the tax increases, the expenses for tobacco consumption on household income also increases, thus increasing the burden on the family budget, especially on poorer smokers.

The smokers from poor family are more sensitive to price increasing. Hopefully as a result if the tax increased the majority will likely reduce or quit smoking. Their respect on their families and society at large likely give them benefit because there will be lower health cost and more resource for other essential goods such as education. Therefore, government should allocate and revenues by higher tobacco taxes towards social program so the poor could get benefit such as accessibly in health

services, health insurance and cessation programmes.

The Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) to control tobacco economics and the concerns of governments about taxes on poor smokers are about helpin countries to enhance their ability to resist the epidemic of tobacco and to implement responsibilities that encompass surveillance of the global tobacco epidemic, advisin countries on taxation as an instrument of tobacco control policy and other economic policies to control tobacco.

2 METHODS

In this research, a systematic literature review of the research studies of Tobacco Free Initiative activity around the world has been used.

3 RESULT

Table 1: Tobacco Free Initiative in 2003-2004

Activity	Sub-activity(program)
WHO FCTC awareness-raising workshops and technical support to Member States	WHO Regional meetings
	National consultations on the Treaty
Tobacco Control legislation	-
Research and Policy Development	Economics and tobacco control
	Meetings and consultations on the economics of tobacco control
Cessation of tobacco use	Second-hand tobacco smoke (SHS)
	Youth and gender-related issues
Surveillance and Monitoring Tobacco-related surveillance	Tobacco Industry Monitoring (TIM)
	Training and Capacity Building
	World No Tobacco Day (WNTD)
	TFI's Global Network
Donors	-

Source : Tobacco Free Initiative Report of Activity 2003-2004(WHO)

Table 2: Tobacco Free Initiative in 2008

Activity	Sub-activity (program)
Capacity-Building, Training And Research	Capacity assessment
	Building the national capacity for implementing effective tobacco control policies
	Legislation and regulation for tobacco control
	Economics of tobacco control
	Tobacco Free Initiative support of Bloomberg Initiative grants
	Youth activities
	Cessation
	Raising awareness and capacity-building workshops on illicit trade in tobacco products
	Gender and tobacco
	Global Tobacco Surveillance Systems
	Global Youth Tobacco Survey
	Global Health

Activity	Sub-activity (program)
	Professionals Student Survey
Monitoring The Tobacco Industry	-
Communication And Partnerships	United Nations Task Force
	World No Tobacco Day
Product Regulation	-

Source : WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, 2008

4 DISCUSSION

The Tobacco Free Initiative has designed a method to help countries identify their resources needs and challenges for implementing effective and sustainable tobacco control policies such as FCTC awareness raising workshops and technical support to member states, tobacco control legislation, research and policy development, the cessation of tobacco use, surveillance and monitoring tobacco-related surveillance, and donors (2003-2004). In 2008, there are capacity-building, training and research products and regulation communication and partnerships monitoring the tobacco industry and global tobacco surveillance systems. WHO FTCT as a tool for global tobacco control efforts and TFI (Tobacco Free Initiative) is likely a paradigm of the core functions.

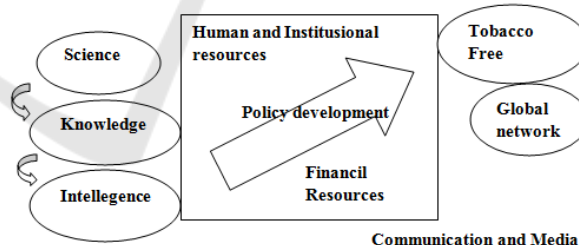


Figure 1: Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) : Paradigm of core function

1. Science: All tobacco products cause disease and death worldwide by up to 5M death/year, Tobacco leads to poverty at the individual and societal level
2. Knowledge: Building the knowledge base for tobacco control
3. Intelligence: Tobacco industry monitoring such as the periodic monitoring of tobacco industry activities across all WHO regions and ongoing development of a database with industry monitoring reports

4. Humans and Institutional resources: Countries where regional/sub-regional/national levels have participated in WHO initiatives
5. Policy development: Recommendations for the economics of tobacco control, smoking cessation and the treatment of tobacco dependence, gender responsive tobacco control and smoke free places
6. Communication and Media: World No Tobacco Day, and Worldwide Campaigns on 31 May
7. Global Network: International agencies, Civil society, NGOs, collaborating centres, member states and regional economic integration organisations

TFI (Tobacco Free Initiative) work is only possible thanks to collaboration with other institutions and financial support from several donors.

5 CONCLUSION

Tobacco control programs could reach specific populations that fall outside the usual regulatory mechanisms and operate on the margins of community, yet still continuing fail to reduce the differential vulnerability impacts of tobacco use. It is necessary to take an actions regarding tobacco control need to be taken to minimize the barriers to tobacco prevention and cessation services especially for smoker from lower and middle class family. Furthermore, an effort to prevent and control tobacco consumption among those groups are not likely to succeed beyond an integrated approach that seeks to reduce the fundamental social inequities that affects the groups to tobacco use, and gives them a relative disadvantage in accessing cessation discontinuance services.

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