

## State Level Advocacy Meeting

### Under the Project “Tobacco Control Campaign by Mobilising Key Stakeholders in Rajasthan State”

May 12, 2009, Hotel Maharani Plaza, Jaipur

#### Introduction

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised the ‘State Level Advocacy Meeting’ under the project entitled “Tobacco Control Campaign by Mobilising Key Stakeholders in Rajasthan State” in partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO India), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, and in active collaboration with Department of Medical & Health, Government of Rajasthan at Hotel Maharani Plaza, Jaipur, on May 12, 2009.

#### Objective

The objective of the workshop was to disseminate key findings of the project, as well as create a platform for advocating with government on tobacco control issues, which emerged out of project findings.

#### Participation

More than 80 participants, including officials from concerned government departments, civil society organisations (CSOs) working on health issues, tobacco cessation centres, selected schools, media, doctors and other individual working on the issues were present in the meeting.

#### Proceedings

##### *Inaugural Session*

The meeting started with the screening of documentary film “Choose Life, Not Tobacco” and health awareness video spots, which was appreciated by the participants.

The inaugural session began with the warm welcome of distinguish guests and participating stakeholders by **George Cheriyan**, Director CUTS. In his introductory remarks, Cheriyan provided a brief introduction about



various programme areas and project activities. He stated that the meeting has been organised at a very crucial point as 'World No Tobacco Day' is approaching and this year's theme is 'Tobacco Health Warnings'. Emphasis should be placed upon the strict compliance of Supreme Court's verdict of displaying pictorial health warnings on tobacco products with effect from May 31, 2009.

He also shared the some of the key findings and alarming facts of various survey's conducted by CUTS CART under the tobacco control intervention, which underlines the need for strict enforcement of law. He concluded by thanking the government officials and the participants for their active participation and involvement.

**Amar Deep Singh**, Project Officer, CUTS CART presented the project highlights and its key findings. He briefed about the activities conducted under the project, i.e. state-level launch, divisional level advocacy meetings and awareness rallies, divisional level tobacco sample survey, as well as other interventions in Rajasthan. He also shared the observation and impact created through the intervention. Due to the involvement of the Centre in tobacco control initiatives, CUTS CART has been selected as a member of the State-level Monitoring/Steering Committee under Tobacco Control Programme of Department of Medical Health and Family Welfare, Government of Rajasthan.



While presenting the key findings of the tobacco sample survey conducted in all seven divisions of Rajasthan, he told that selling of tobacco products to the minors are accepted by 60 percent of tobacco sellers, while 17 percent tobacco shops were found within the radius of 100 yards of the schools. It is a clear violation of Section 6 of Tobacco Control Law (COTPA 2003). About 64 percent of respondents accepted that they serve tobacco to guests at home and in social functions, while 84 percent accepted that this custom has affected children and others. Traditional prevalence of tobacco was found highest in Dholpur district of Rajasthan.

62 percent of tobacco users consume chewing tobacco, which is more harmful. Consumption of chewing tobacco was found to be the highest in Kota. 53 percent of tobacco users started consuming tobacco before the age of 18 years, though there is ban on selling of tobacco to minors.

He mentioned some of the recommendations, which emerged out of the survey findings. He thanked all network partners, who extended their support in conducting various activities in the state.

### **Key Findings of the Project**

- Low level of awareness among the general public about various sections of tobacco control law.
- High rate of tobacco consumption in social events shows the heavy influence of traditional practices mostly in rural community.

- Schools authorities are not bothered about the Section 6 of tobacco law, which bans sale of tobacco to minors and near schools.
- Easy availability and accessibility of tobacco products, which makes increased exposure to minors, who can also easily buy the tobacco products.
- Low level of awareness in general public about harmful effects of tobacco use.
- Enforcement machineries are not geared up for anti-tobacco activities and tobacco control is not on the priority, among other responsibilities.
- Lack of strict implementation of ‘ban of smoking in public places’.

**Dr R N D Purohit**, Director, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Rajasthan, was the chief guest. While delivering inaugural address, he appreciated CUTS CART for its focus on such an important issue of public health. He stated that tobacco is a silent killer, which is filling poison in the life fluid of the society, especially in rural society where consumption of tobacco is comparatively high. Therefore, we need to put more thrust on awareness generation to save our society landing into catastrophe situation. He further emphasised upon the need to build strategies based on the findings of the project. He assured full cooperation and support of the department in implementing the recommendations emerged out of project and its study.



**Monika Arora**, Executive Director, Health Related Information Dissemination Among Youth (HRIDAY), New Delhi thanked CUTS CART to arrange an advocacy workshop involving government officials and leading CSOs. While delivering keynote address on the theme of ‘Tobacco Health Warnings’, he informed the importance of pictorial health warnings on tobacco products to reduce tobacco consumption. According to certain researches pictorial warning is the most effective means to reach out to larger audience. Moreover, this is an important strategy to target people who are using one or the other form of tobacco without any fear.



She opined that COTPA was enacted in 2003 in which there was a provision of mandatory depiction of specified pictorial health warnings on all tobacco product packs. Though several amendments were made to the Act, but this provision did not come into effect. Now, initially the government had decided to have warnings on both sides of the cigarette pack, but as per Supreme Court’s verdict: “the pictorial warning shall be limited to 40 percent of the principal display area on the front panel of the package only” which will come in effect from May

31, 2009.

She shared the impact of pictorial warnings in Canada, which effectively reduced tobacco consumption to a great extent. In Brazil, Singapore, and Thailand pictorial warning slogan is changed every year so that it can hit people every time they use any tobacco

product. She also mentioned about the opposition by the giant tobacco producing companies towards pictorial warnings, as it would affect their business. In the end, she said that there are various challenges ahead in the implementation of this law but CSOs should help implement the law strictly.

**Dr. D K Ameta**, State Nodal Officer, Tobacco Control Cell, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Rajasthan, appreciated CUTS CART's intervention in tobacco control and assured to put in action all recommendations. He spoke about side effects of tobacco products and said that awareness generation in youth can help to solve this problem. He mentioned that findings of the survey are showing the picture of tobacco consumption in Rajasthan and its deep root in the society. He mentioned that CSO's are helping in tobacco control intervention of the government. Tobacco cessation center in Rajasthan are few, which can be established more. At the same time, he assured full support from government side.



**Pranay Lal**, Consultant, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), New Delhi, presented the brief introduction of his organisation and its different programmes. The Union, New Delhi is also performing as a regional resource agency for 'Bloomberg Global Initiatives to Reduce Tobacco Use (BGI)'. Bloomberg invites project idea and proposals from NGOs for funding support. Moving further, he provided the information on the process to submit a proposal and know its status after submitting.

At the end of inaugural session, Amar Deep Singh thanked Dr. R N D Purohit, Monika Arora and Pranay Lal for addressing the meeting.

### ***Technical Session***

**Dr. A U Rehman**, Incharge, Tobacco Cessation Centre, Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital & Health Research Centre (BMCHRC), Jaipur chaired the technical session and expressed his views by quoting "Human beings claim that they are the most intelligent species among 84 lakhs species on the earth. But the fact is that animals are sensible and do not bother to eat the green leaves of tobacco. It is really sad when human beings consider it as a sign of passion as well as fashion". He emphasised on the harmful effects of tobacco products and said that awareness generation programmes should be organised for youth.

**Radhika Shrivastav**, HRIDAY gave a presentation on "Involving Youth in Tobacco Control Initiatives". She emphasised on the fact that youth can play an important role in reducing the consumption level of tobacco products. She cited the examples of different strategies that HRIDAY use to involve youth in various tobacco control campaigns. She opined that school awareness campaign should be conducted where students be made

aware of ill effects of tobacco consumption and the deadly diseases caused due to tobacco consumption. This will enable the youth to be more aware and further disseminate the message. She informed about the advocacy groups formulated under the awareness campaign. She briefed about various other activities being implemented by HRIDAY.

**Deepti Singh**, HRIDAY delivered a presentation on the subject ‘Enforcing Tobacco Control Legislation in India’. She explained the legal provisions under ‘Cigarette & other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) 2003’ which bans smoking in public places, tobacco sale to minors and near schools, advertisements. She also mentioned about pictorial health warnings and the problems/possibilities of the provisions of the COTPA.

### **Open Discussion**

An open discussion session was held in which participants shared their own experiences, raised queries and came up with certain suggestions. Some of the major points of discussion and thoughts of participants are mentioned below:

- Penalty system is very difficult.
- Tobacco sale is very high near schools.
- To develop the household industries, some self-help groups (SHGs) are providing training to prepare *Bidi*.
- Smoking scene in movies influence youth to initiate smoking.
- Government employees themselves violate the rule and smoke in the office premises.
- Cultivation of tobacco should be licensed.
- Various committees and CSOs should be authorised to impose penalty on public smoking.

After the discussion, Dharmendra Chaturvedi, CUTS CART proposed the vote of thanks to all distinguished guests and participants.



### **Recommendations**

Following recommendations emerged out from the findings of the project and discussion in advocacy meeting:

### ***Recommendations for Enforcement Agencies and Policy Makers***

- More publicity through media about the existing law.
- Mass awareness programme for general public about the harmful effects of tobacco use.
- Rural masses should be made aware about the tobacco control law and harmful effects of tobacco use.
- Ensuring strict enforcement of the law, especially ban on tobacco selling to the minors and near educational institutions.
- Strict implementation of ban on smoking in public and work places.
- Sensitisation of enforcement officials on tobacco control programme.
- Establishment of mechanism for penalty on smoking in public places.
- Strict ban on advertisements of tobacco products.
- Involvement of tobacco related chapter in schools syllabi.
- Establishment of tobacco cessation centres.
- Increasing taxes on tobacco products and ban on loose sale.
- Establishment of linkages between all groups working for tobacco control, tobacco cessation centres and tobacco control programmes of the government.

### ***Recommendations for CSOs***

- Advocacy on policy issues like smoke free public places, pictorial health warnings, ban on advertisements of tobacco products etc.
- Playing a role of watchdog to note the violation of law and sharing of information with each other.
- Collective efforts towards tobacco control.

### ***Recommendations for Others***

- School authorities to prevent tobacco selling near schools.
- Media should not entertain surrogate advertisements.
- More informed stories and more space allocation for tobacco stories in media.
- People should ask for the rights of healthy environment and oppose the passive smoking.
- Public should follow the rule of tobacco control.

### **Outcome**

- Helpful in creating awareness on tobacco issue in the society.
- Successfully disseminated the findings of the project.
- Assurance from participating officials of concerned government departments to put the recommendations of the project in action.
- Participation of CSOs, media, school authorities, students, hospitals, tobacco cessation centres, other individuals working on the same issue has helped build strong advocacy.
- Media coverage in drawing attention of general public and policy makers.
- Overall such strong advocacy will increase active enforcement of law.

## News Clippings of the Events:

Hindustan Times, May 14 2009

News Today, May 13, 2009

**world no tobacco day**

# 'Need to keep close watch on pictorial warning'

**HT Correspondent**

THERE IS a need to raise collective monitoring by civil society organisation (CSO) for strict enforcement of the Supreme Court order of displaying pictorial warning on all tobacco products with effects from May 31, 2009, the World No Tobacco Day, said Monika Arora, executive director, Hriday-Shan, a Delhi-based NGO.

The pictorial health warning on tobacco products would reduce the tobacco consumption and Canada is an example where pictorial warning has effectively reduced tobacco consumption, said Arora.

He was addressing a tobacco advocacy group in a state-level meeting organised by the Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CARTS) in the city.

A consensus emerged among the various stakeholders for collective monitoring in order to achieve strict enforcement of the Supreme Court order on the display of pictorial warning.

The event was organised under the project 'Tobacco Control Campaign', being implemented in association with the World Health Organization, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and Department of Medical & Health, Government of Rajasthan.

RND Purohit, Director, Department of Medical & Health, Government of Rajasthan emphasised upon the need to build strategies based on the findings of the project.

## चेतावनी से तंबाकू उपभोग में आएगी कमी

जयपुर, 13 मई (न्यूज टुडे)

कर्टस की ओर से 'राजस्थान राज्य में प्रमुख भागीदारों को संगठित कर तंबाकू नियंत्रण अभियान' के अन्तर्गत मंगलवार को होटल महारानी खाना में बैठक हुई।

विश्व तंबाकू निषेध दिवस (31 मई) से जारी होने वाले तंबाकू उत्पादों पर चित्रित चेतावनी को पूर्ण रूप से क्रियान्वित करने पर बैठक में आए सभी प्रतिभागियों ने सहमति व्यक्त की। बैठक में स्वयं शरण संस्था की निदेशिका मोंगिका अरोड़ा ने कहा कि तंबाकू उत्पाद निर्मित करने वाली कंपनियों के साथ हमें लंबे संघर्ष के परिणामस्वरूप यह जीत हासिल हुई है। तंबाकू उत्पादों पर चित्रित चेतावनी से तंबाकू के उपभोग में कमी आएगी।

Panjab Kesri, May 13, 2009

### चेतावनी के क्रियान्वयन पर निगरानी आवश्यक

जयपुर, (वि.): विश्व तंबाकू निषेध दिवस से जारी होने वाले तंबाकू उत्पादों पर चित्रित चेतावनी को पूर्ण रूप से क्रियान्वयन करने के लिए देखरेख करना आवश्यक है। उक्त मुद्दे पर कर्टस कार्ट द्वारा आयोजित परियोजना राजस्थान राज्य में प्रमुख भागीदारों को संगठित कर तंबाकू नियंत्रण अभियान के अन्तर्गत 12 मई को जयपुर में राज्य स्तरीय पैरवी बैठक में धाम लेने वाले प्रतिभागियों ने अपनी सहमति व्यक्त की।