Knowledge Hub Info – April to September 2019

Information for Parties on the work of the
WHO FCTC Secretariat's Knowledge Hubs

This is the combined eighth and ninth issue of the Convention Secretariat’s newsletter on the work of its Knowledge Hubs (KHs). This issue covers the major of activities and achievements of KHs between April-September 2019.

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WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking (KH-WTS)

Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking (WTS) Knowledge Hub Webinar Series

The KH-WTS has continued the initiative of organizing webinars, aimed at highlighting and disseminating information on waterpipe smoking control, as well as discussing contemporary issues related to waterpipe use. So far this year, the KH has organized the following series of webinars:

**Webinar #1 on 19 June:** “Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking: The pressing need for risk communication through health warning labels” presented by Dr. Taghrid Asfar, Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine (USA), who highlighted the potential of health warning labels for waterpipe regulations and the development of the first set of health warning labels for waterpipe using an international Delphi study among expert.

**Webinar #2 on July 24:** “Toxicant content, physical properties and biological activity of waterpipe tobacco smoke and its tobacco-free alternatives” by Dr. Najat A. Saliba, Director, Nature Conservation Center Professor, Chemistry Department, American University of Beirut (AUB). The session included a review of the chemical, physical and biological properties of waterpipe smoke and their potential effect on health.

**Webinar #3 on September 18:** “Health effects of waterpipe Tobacco use” presented by Dr. Hassan Chami, Director of Respiratory Care Unit, Director of Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program, Associate Professor of Medicine, AUB. The objective was to highlight the harmful effects of waterpipe tobacco smoking, as well as to point out the importance of public awareness to dispel the notion of harmlessness of waterpipe tobacco smoking to active users and those around them.

More details on the webinars, including the presentations, are available on the following link: [https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/waterpipes/webinars/](https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/waterpipes/webinars/)
For further information about the webinars, please contact Ms. Jessica Najm at jn44@aub.edu.lb.

**Upcoming events**

*Work on School Awareness Sessions (Winter 2019-2020) - WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking*

The KH-WTS has started discussing with local active non-governmental organization (NGOs) on educational awareness presentations to youth in schools in Lebanon about the harms of waterpipe tobacco smoking. The KH is in the process of preparing comprehensive user friendly and well-targeted educational materials to be used for this purpose.

Please also follow KH-WTS on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) for updates.

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**Support needed to develop legislation on waterpipe control?**

Parties interested in developing waterpipe control legislation, as well as in need to promote and facilitate policy research on this topic, are invited to send a request to Dr. Tibor Szilagyi at szilagyit@who.int, or directly to the hub with Dr. Szilagyi in copy.

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**WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Taxation**

**Tobacco Tax Modelling Workshop**

The KH organized and hosted a workshop on tobacco taxation and tax modelling between 15-19 July 2019, in Cape Town. Representatives from the Ministries of Finance and Health of six countries participated: Ethiopia, Georgia, Myanmar, Samoa, Sierra Leone and South Africa. The workshop focused on the various economic concepts and theories of tobacco taxation, with practical sessions allowing attendees to apply the theory learnt during the workshop.
The workshop provided an opportunity to develop country-specific models, allowing countries to estimate the likely fiscal impact of a change in either the excise tax structure (e.g., moving from an ad valorem tax system to a specific tax system) or the level of the excise tax. Additionally, participants were introduced to the important concepts in the economics of tobacco control, tax structures, illicit trade, and tax earmarking.

**New accredited Research Unit**

The Economics of Tobacco Control Project (ETC), which was nominated by the South Africa National Department of Health to establish the KH, has successfully applied to the University of Cape Town to become an accredited Research Unit, the Research Unit on the Economics of Excisable Products (REEP). As the name indicates, the unit focuses its research on economic aspects related to a variety of excisable products, with a primary focus on tobacco.

A newsletter from the REEP is periodically produced. Subscription to the newsletter is encouraged, following this link to sign-up:

http://www.tobaccoecon.uct.ac.za/leep-e-newsletter

**New materials to support implementation of tobacco taxes**

To increase the engagement on tobacco taxation from government officials and other stakeholders, the KH has initiated a series of “Back to Basics” policy briefs covering key themes. The format is a one-page briefs made accessible and easy to read, including the most important information regarding various tobacco-taxation topics. To date, two briefs have been produced:

- Tobacco Taxes and Tax Administration (July 2019):

- The Rationale for Tobacco Tax and Price Measures (August 2019):

**Upcoming events**

*Workshop on tobacco taxation and tax modelling – WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Taxation*

The second edition of the taxation and tax modelling workshop for this year is taking place from 11 to 15 November 2019 in Cape Town. A call for interest was channeled to Parties through the Convention Secretariat, with a remarkable positive response from the countries. This workshop is aimed at providing policy makers with the essential tools to illustrate the benefits of tobacco taxation using taxation modelling. High level policy makers from both the Ministries of Health and Finance have been invited, with specific focus on low and middle-income countries.
WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Surveillance

**Updates on the KH’s website**
The website now provides an extended collection of resources to support national tobacco control surveillance and monitoring. The aim for the update is to support Parties to WHO FCTC and other stakeholders in finding relevant information to conduct tobacco control surveillance and monitoring projects at national level. Monitoring tobacco prevalence and evaluating results of tobacco control programs are key elements when implementing Article 20 of the WHO FCTC.

- Blog platform: This section has been launched to provide practical information on current topics in tobacco surveillance and monitoring, where it welcomes blog posts on a range of topics in the field.
- Guidelines section: A set of resources is available to assist the implementation and evaluation of tobacco control programs, providing an overview of each guideline, and the various ways they can be used for.
- Case studies page: This section gathers the most recent updates on the Parties’ implementation of Article 20. The cases are based on the countries’ reporting to the WHO FCTC Secretariat.
- Materials and documents: A series of factsheets, brochures and documents (including translated materials) present key elements in tobacco control monitoring.

For further information about the webinar series, please contact the Knowledge Hub at fctcknowledgehub@thl.fi

Please also follow the KH on Twitter for updates.

WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Smokeless Tobacco (KH-SLT)

**Online Course on Smokeless Tobacco Control**

On 5 May 2019, the KH-SLT in collaboration with Tobacco Control Research Branch (TCRB) at National Cancer Institute (NCI), Bethesda, Maryland, USA, launched an online course on Smokeless Tobacco Control. Renowned experts in tobacco control from across the globe constituted the panel of faculty for this program.
The course was carved out especially keeping in cognizance of the different training and research needs with respect to SLT surveillance, control measures, industry tactics, laws, policies and taxation measures. This short-term course provided participants with skills and strategies necessary in supporting effective SLT control policy development, implementation and evaluation.

The KH-SLT is planning to offer more online courses in the near future.

**KH-SLT to advice Parties on SLT control plans**

Parties interested in addressing smokeless tobacco use by developing relevant control plans and policies, as well as related research, can send a request to Dr. Tibor Szilagyi at szilagyi@who.int, or directly to the KH-SLT with Dr. Szilagyi in copy.

**WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Legal Challenges**

**9th International Legal Training Course on law and noncommunicable disease prevention**

The KH held its 9th International Legal Training Course on law and noncommunicable disease (NCD) prevention in Melbourne, Australia, from 29 April to 17 May 2019.

The course was attended by a total of 27 participants from 19 WHO FCTC Parties, with a focus on the use of law to prevent noncommunicable diseases, including through scaling up WHO FCTC implementation. Further information can be found on the following link: [https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/legal-challenges/australia-mccabe-centres-9th-international-legal-training-course/](https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/legal-challenges/australia-mccabe-centres-9th-international-legal-training-course/)

Parties interested in nominating participants for future courses should discuss their needs with the Convention Secretariat. A list of the trainings conducted by the Knowledge Hub is available from its website: [https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/legal-challenges/support-available-fctc-parties/](https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/legal-challenges/support-available-fctc-parties/)

**The BAT legal challenge against Uganda**

The Knowledge Hub on Legal Challenges compiled the information of the recent Constitutional Court case in Uganda. On 28 May 2019, a five-judge bench of the Constitutional Court of Uganda unanimously rejected a legal challenge brought by British American Tobacco (BAT) against the Tobacco Control Act 2015 of Uganda. In doing so, the court affirmed that the Tobacco Control Act was enacted in order for the state to meet its obligations to protect the fundamental rights to life, health, and a clean and healthy environment. It also strongly criticized the litigation as part of a global strategy by tobacco companies to undermine public health legislation in order to increase their profits at the expense of public health.


**WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub for Article 5.3**

**Brief on the Dangers of the “Unsmoke” Campaign**

The KH prepared a brief on the frequently asked questions about the Philip Morris International (PMI)’s “Unsmoke” campaign, created to market electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and heated tobacco products (HTPs). On 08 April 2019, PMI launched “The Year of Unsmoke” — a call for action to “smokers, nonsmokers, regulators and agents of change... who can empower a smoke-free future”, with a key message: “If you don’t smoke, don’t start. If you smoke, quit. If you don’t quit, change”.

On 21 May 2019, PMI launched “It’s Time to Unsmoke” at Wall Street’s Future of Everything annual event. The initiative calls for authorities and regulators to “have an open conversation and come up with a meaningful solution on how we can Unsmoke the world”. This campaign conveys safety of ENDS/HTPs, misleads public especially the youth, promotes vaping in smoke-free areas, and could trigger smoking urges. Furthermore, the campaign distracts and undermines the progress of WHO FCTC on smoke-free laws, advertising restrictions, tax increases, protecting against tobacco tactics, and making the tobacco industry accountable.

Access the brief, prepared jointly with the Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products (STOP), through the following link:  [https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/article-53/dangers-unsmoke-campaign-frequently-asked-questions/](https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/article-53/dangers-unsmoke-campaign-frequently-asked-questions/)
Fact sheets on tobacco industry interference

Upon request and commissioned by the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO), the KH for Article 5.3 developed 8 fact sheets on tobacco industry interference awareness. These fact sheets provide details on tobacco industry interference in the EMRO region, to be launched by WHO EMRO. They will subsequently be made publicly available on its website. The Fact sheets cover the following topics:

i. Tobacco Industry Interference in Tobacco control policy
ii. Tobacco Industry Interference in Tax
iii. Tobacco Industry Interference in Packaging
iv. Tobacco Industry Interference in Smoke Free
v. Tobacco Industry Interference in TAPS
vi. How do you sell addiction? (FAQ)
vii. Tobacco Industry Decades of Deception
viii. Tobacco industry interference Indicators

SARC-CCT meeting in Sri Lanka

The Centre for Combating Tobacco (CCT) gathered representatives from 8 South Asian countries for a workshop and to launch a regional initiative namely, the South Asia Regional Consortium (SARC). The launch of SARC-CCT was well attended by Vice Chancellor of University of Colombo, Dean of Medical Faculty, government officials from the Ministry of Health (NATA), WHO, civil society groups and the media. Experts from the KH for Article 5.3, together with representatives from the tobacco industry monitoring centres (observatories), participated in the meeting, among other authorities from eight South Asian countries.

At the meeting, all countries agreed to make a national plan for monitoring the industry at different levels and developing partnerships with local partners. The discussions at the meeting prompted the initiation of South-South cooperation plans in the region, aimed at promoting better monitoring of the tobacco industry tactics at national level.

Protect public health policies from tobacco industry interests

Parties interested in developing projects on the implementation of Article 5.3 and tobacco industry monitoring, please send a request to Dr. Tibor Szilagyi at szilagyit@who.int, or the hub directly with Dr. Szilagyi in copy.
**Implementation of Article 14 of the Convention in populations with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis**

To strengthen the implementation of FCTC among populations with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, the KH carried out a project targeting these specific groups. The project aimed at providing technical assistance to Parties in the integration of tobacco cessation activities with other comorbidities' programmes, such as those on HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. The implementation took place successfully in Gambia and Ukraine. Further information will be available on the KH’s website soon.

**Joint Activities**

In addition to the above-mentioned activities carried out by each individual KH, the KHS have also participated in some joint activities.

**Fourth Meeting of the WHO FCTC Knowledge Hubs’ Managers**

The managers/directors of the seven WHO FCTC Knowledge Hubs met for a management meeting on 13-14 May 2019 in Thailand, kindly hosted by the KH for Article 5.3. As previously, the meeting provided a platform for information exchange and mutual learning, with a final objective to increase the efficiency of the work of and the coordination between the hubs, to continue improving the support provided to the WHO FCTC Parties in their implementation of the Convention. The work plans of the KHS were discussed and aligned with the decisions of the eight session of the Conference of the Parties (COP8) and the first session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP1), as well as with the recently adopted Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control.
The Secretariat is committed to inform Parties regularly on the work of its Knowledge Hubs.

Should you wish to receive assistance on any of the areas of work of the KHS, please contact Dr. Tibor Szilagyi from the Convention Secretariat at szilagyit@who.int, or the hubs directly with Dr. Szilagyi in copy.