Knowledge Hub Info – 8 March 2019

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

This is the seventh issue of the Convention Secretariat’s newsletter on the work of its Knowledge Hubs (KHs). This issue covers the major activities and achievements of KHs during 2018, and in January-February 2019.

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An Overview of Global Regulatory Practices in Controlling Waterpipe Tobacco Use

The KH-WTS published a report in July 2018, under a grant from the WHO FCTC Secretariat, summarizing and analyzing global regulatory practices for waterpipe tobacco use, based on experiences from 39 countries with existing regulations on waterpipe tobacco products and/or waterpipe use. This report identifies the evidence gaps on legislation and regulation, as well as provides key observations for the development and adoption of future policies in the regulation and control of waterpipe use. The overview was prepared in accordance with COP7 decision FCTC/COP7(4) and was submitted for consideration to COP8 as a background document.

The report is available at the following links:
http://www.who.int/fctc/cop/sessions/cop8/WHO-FCTC-Regulatory-Practices-on-water-pipes.pdf and

Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking (WTS) Knowledge Hub Webinar Series

In its efforts to highlight and disseminate knowledge on waterpipe smoking control, the KH-WTS organized a series of four webinars between July 2018 and February 2019 on a range of topics related to the prevention and control of waterpipe tobacco use. The series was opened by Dr. Ghazi Zaatari, the Director of the KH-WTS, who highlighted the global WTS epidemic and the significance of the work of the KH. The following two webinars reviewed the status of waterpipe control policies and regulations, with recommendations for implementation of WHO FCTC Articles, and introduced the relevance of WHO FCTC for waterpipe tobacco control policies in light of COP8 decisions. The most recent webinar, on 26 February 2019, featured Dr. Monique Chaaya, professor and chair of the Department of Epidemiology and Population Health at AUB in Beirut, provided an overview of waterpipe tobacco smoking trends in Lebanon and in the Eastern
Mediterranean region. Through these four webinars, KH-WTS aimed to further raise awareness and promote discussions on waterpipe tobacco smoking use and control.

More details of the webinars, including the presentations used, are available at the following link: [https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/waterpipes/webinars/](https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/waterpipes/webinars/)

**Workshops on Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking Regulations & Challenges, and Illicit Tobacco Trade and Taxation in the EMR**

In collaboration with the WHO FCTC Secretariat, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the WHO country office for Lebanon, the KH-WTS organized and hosted two consecutive workshops at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon in November 2018.

The first workshop, entitled “Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking Regulations & Challenges”, was carried out on 6-7 November 2018, attended by policy-makers, non-government organizations and academics from the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR). The workshop reviewed the current legislation of waterpipe tobacco smoking control and how evidence could guide regulations. The participants also discussed the challenges associated with the enactment and enforcement of relevant legislation in the context of different countries. To address the challenges, a set of tailored recommendations for future actions were identified.

The second workshop on “Illicit Tobacco Trade and Taxation in the Eastern Mediterranean Region” took place on 8-9 November 2018, with the participation of the KH-WTS, the WHO Regional Office for the EMR, the WHO country office for Lebanon and the Convention Secretariat. This was a capacity building workshop, during which the Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control (GS 2025) was introduced, and the implementation of WHO FCTC Article 6 and the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products were comprehensively discussed.
More details about the workshop, including agenda, list of speakers and presentations are available at the following link: [https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/waterpipes/workshops/](https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/waterpipes/workshops/).

For further information about the webinars and the workshops, please contact Ms. Jessica Najm at jn44@aub.edu.lb.

Please also follow KH-WTS on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube for updates.

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

**Official Launch of the Knowledge Hub on Taxation**

The Knowledge Hub on Taxation was officially launched on 6 March 2018 during a side event of the World Conference on Tobacco or Health (WCTOH). The launch was attended by around 80 participants and was officiated by the South African Minister of Health. Speakers at the launch included the Minister of Health, the Head of the WHO FCTC Secretariat, the Director of Saldr of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the Vice-Chancellor of UCT and the Sefako Matgatho Medical University.

On the same day, the KH hosted a pre-conference workshop on tax modelling and economics of tobacco control in collaboration with the Tobacconomics Research Group. The workshop focused on the basics of the economics of tobacco control and attracted a broad array of participants from civil society, NGOs and government.

**Tobacco Taxation Workshops**

The KH organized two workshops in 2018. The first one was held for Francophone countries based in Africa between 29 January and 1 February, with a focus on tobacco tax modelling, illicit trade, and industry arguments against taxation and earmarking. Participants from Ministries of Health and Finance of Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mauritania and Madagascar attended the
workshop. And a follow up technical assistance mission to Chad took place as an outcome of this workshop.

The second workshop, “Economics of Tobacco Control Project: Integrated Tobacco Taxation Workshop”, took place on 22-26 October 2018 in Cape Town, South Africa with participants from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health of Bangladesh, Botswana, Iran, Myanmar, South Africa and Zambia. Attendees were trained on a series of topics in the economics of tobacco control, such as tobacco tax structures, illicit trade measurement and use of affordability to monitor progress on tobacco taxation.

Presentations can be downloaded at (by members only): https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/taxation/member-only-resources/.

Technical Assistance to Parties

Throughout 2018, the staff members of the KH continuously supported the Parties in the implementation of Articles 6 and 15 through providing direct technical assistance upon request. For example, the KH was invited to provide technical consultation for various tobacco tax reforms in Myanmar and Cambodia. The KH was also involved in the needs assessment mission carried out by the WHO FCTC Secretariat in Zambia.

Other Technical Activities

In February 2019, the KH submitted comments to the South African Revenue Service (SARS) on the draft rule on implementing production line counters to reduce illicit trade in tobacco products in the country. The KH expressed their opposition to the implementation of such counters, which are deemed to be ineffective, inaccurate and highly susceptible to tampering and fraud. Instead, the KH proposed setting up a system that can track and trace the manufacture, import and export of tobacco products, independent of tobacco industry, as recommended by the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

In addition, the KH prepared a short campaign film introducing the work of the KH. Access to this promotional video at: https://vimeo.com/261981356

Please also follow the KH on Twitter for updates.
**Advising Parties on the establishment of tobacco surveillance systems in line with Article 20 of the Convention**

In its efforts to strengthen tobacco surveillance, research and exchange of information in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), the Knowledge Hub on Surveillance launched a project entitled “Advising Parties on the establishment of tobacco surveillance systems in line with Article 20 of the Convention” in 2018. The project was carried out from a grant provided by the Government of Norway, through the Convention Secretariat, and from a grant provided by the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Activities conducted within the project included identifying LMIC Parties potentially interested in receiving technical assistance, provision of advice in the form of new materials targeted at LMIC Parties, and organizing a series of five thematic webinars focusing on topics relevant to LMICs. The work carried out within the project forms a basis for further endeavors on strengthening and supporting tobacco surveillance and monitoring in low- and middle-income countries.

The KH, together with the Convention Secretariat, in consultation with WHO regional offices, is trying to identify potential LMIC Parties interested in receiving direct technical assistance on the establishment of a comprehensive tobacco surveillance system. The initiative would encourage the integration of the WHO FCTC on existing national surveys, mobilize stakeholders to implement Article 20 and the GS 2025, and promote voluntary reporting on target 3.a of Sustainable Development Goals. Parties were also informed of this opportunity and the Secretariat received a few requests.

The KH, with the assistance of the Convention Secretariat, is currently fundraising to initiate some pilot projects in the Parties that identified their needs to work in this area.

**New materials to support implementation of Article 20**

New materials on Article 20 targeted especially at LMICs were designed and produced by the Knowledge Hub. The materials could serve as tools to raise awareness on the actions needed to strengthen implementation of Article 20 with a focus on LMIC Parties of the Convention, presenting current figures and the implementation status of Article 20 of the Convention and highlighting the benefits of implementing Article 20.

The new materials include two factsheets on current implementing status by WHO regions and by Parties’ income group, a brochure on key elements and benefits of investing in the implementation of Article 20, and a factsheet on tobacco control monitoring.
The new materials can be accessed at the following site, and the brochure is also available as a hard copy upon request: https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/surveillance/resources/materials/

**Webinar series on establishing sustainable surveillance systems**

The webinar series “Supporting low and middle-income countries in the establishment of tobacco surveillance systems in line with the Article 20 of the WHO FCTC” was organized between the 12 October and 5 December 2018, hosting nine international specialists in the field of tobacco control monitoring and research. The topics of the webinars covered a wide range, including setting up a sustainable surveillance system; monitoring of tobacco use, tobacco control policies and the health consequences of tobacco consumption; promoting scientific research on tobacco use and tobacco control; and preventing tobacco industry interference in monitoring and research.

![Global reach of webinar series](image)

To reach more audience and to promote the use of the valuable information shared in the webinar, the KH has published the presentations and recordings on their website and has translated the presentations into French and Spanish, the most common UN languages used in LMICs after English. By February 2019, the webinar recordings have been viewed up to 336 times in 23 countries. Altogether 10 LMICs have been involved in the webinars.

![Reach in LMICs of webinar series](image)

Webinar presentations and recordings are available at: https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/surveillance/resources/webinars/webinar-presentations/
For further information about the webinar series, please contact Ms. Sara Jaakonmäki at sara.jaakonmaki@thl.fi
Please also follow the KH on Twitter for updates.

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

Report on Global Smokeless Tobacco Control Policies and Their Implementation

On 25 April 2018, the Knowledge Hub on Smokeless Tobacco (KH-SLT) launched a global status report reviewing the policies on smokeless tobacco (SLT) control and the implementation. The report is the first attempt to document the progress that have been made in SLT control within the realm of the WHO FCTC. The report was launched by Dr. Balram Bhargava, Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research and Secretary of the Department of Health Research of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the launching ceremony received extensive media attention.

The full report can be downloaded at:

Assisting Parties in addressing smokeless tobacco (SLT) use and the development of relevant policies on all WHO FCTC requirements

To strengthen the prevention and control of smokeless tobacco (SLT) use among LMICs, the KH-SLT initiated a project entitled “Assisting Parties in addressing smokeless tobacco (SLT) use and the development of relevant policies on all WHO FCTC requirements” in 2018, funded by a grant provided by the Government of Norway, through the Convention Secretariat. The project included the organization of a series of webinars and country visits.
In its effort to raise awareness on matters related to the prevention and control of SLT use, the KH-SLT hosted a series of seven webinars between June 2018 and January 2019. The discussions were centered on the policy measures and approaches that could be applied by Parties and other stakeholders within their jurisdictions to implement interventions, including taxation and pricing of SLT products, scientific evidence for regulation of these products, labeling and packaging, education and communication on SLT products, and monitoring and surveillance of SLT use. The webinars were attended by over 100 participants from around 15 countries. The presentations and recordings of the webinars have been published on the website of the KH-SLT.


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**Country visits to LMICs**

The implementation of the project is continuing in 2019 and includes direct technical support with regards to SLT policies through country missions in LMICs. Until February 2019, two LMIC visits have been performed/planned. Together with the local collaborators, the KH-SLT is organizing a 3-day workshop on SLT policy issues in Sri Lanka, and a preliminary meeting was conducted on 14-17 January 2019. The visit to Bhutan has been scheduled on 4-6 March 2019, with the aim to study the status and implication of the ban of tobacco products, particularly SLT products.

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

**8th International Legal Training Course on law and noncommunicable disease prevention**

The KH held its 8th International Legal Training Course on law and noncommunicable disease (NCD) prevention in Melbourne, Australia from 30 April to 18 May 2018. The course was attended by a total of 14 participants from 12 WHO FCTC Parties, jointly with representatives of the WHO Regional Office for Africa and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. With an aim to build capacity
in the use of law to prevent cancer and other NCDs, the course covers a range of topics including obligations under, and implementation of, the WHO FCTC; legal challenges to tobacco control measures under trade, investment, and domestic law; and lessons learned from challenges to Australia and Uruguay’s tobacco packaging and labelling measures.

Through the workshop, the KH also provided technical assistance to Parties in the form of supporting priority projects in tobacco control developed by participants, for example developing a regulation on the establishment of a national multi-sectoral committee on NCDs in Laos, drafting of amendments to the Marshall Islands Tobacco Control Act, and so forth.

The *impact of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in defending legal challenges to tobacco control measures*

The Knowledge Hub on Legal Challenges published a paper related to the WHO FCTC impact assessment to evaluate the contribution of the WHO FCTC to the decisions of courts in resolving legal challenges to tobacco control measures. A total of 96 court decisions were reviewed to analyze to what extent the WHO FCTC has provided legal weight to governments’ defences against legal challenges.

This Special Supplement is dedicated to the ten-year impact assessment of the WHO FCTC, a project mandated by the Conference of the Parties. Through the Special Supplement, the findings and lessons learned during the impact assessment are expected to be disseminated to a very wide audience.

This article was published online first on 2 June 2018. The full article is available at: [https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2018/08/17/tobaccocontrol-2018-054329.full](https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2018/08/17/tobaccocontrol-2018-054329.full)

The *WTO Panel Report in Australia – Plain Packaging: Findings and Implications*

On 28 June 2018, the World Trade Organization (WTO) issued a decision in favor of Australia on the legal challenge to Australia’s tobacco plain packaging laws, dismissing the claims brought by Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Indonesia against the measure. This panel decision is a victory for public health and has significant implications for future legal challenges to plain packaging laws and other tobacco control measures in Australia and around the world. In this context, the Knowledge Hub on Legal Challenges elaborated a report analyzing the key findings and main implications of the WTO panel report.


1 A Supplement of Tobacco Control journal will feature several scientific papers that are elaborated in relation to the WHO FCTC impact assessment exercise undertaken in 2015-2016. The Supplement will be published soon.
Workshop on the WTO Panel Report on Australia’s Tobacco Plain Packaging Laws: Findings and Implications

A workshop on the WTO panel decision on Australia’s plain packaging laws was organized by the KH to explore the findings and implications of the WTO panel report. The workshop took place on 12-16 November 2018 in Melbourne, Australia, attended by a total of 27 participants from 24 WHO FCTC Parties, jointly with representatives from the Australian Department of Health and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Convention Secretariat, and WHO. The discussion was centered on the legal and evidentiary findings of the panel and implications for the development of plain packaging legislation, defence of domestic legal challenges, and coherence between the WHO FCTC and international trade law.

McCabe Centre Alumni Workshop
On 19-23 November 2018, the KH held a workshop in Melbourne, Australia for alumni of 3-week intensive training course. A total of 22 alumni from 19 WHO FCTC Parties were selected to attend the workshop to build upon the skills and knowledge gained through the initial training course and post-course support. The course provided an update on recent developments in law and NCDs, including developments in tobacco control at COP7, COP8, and MOP1, the WTO panel decision on Australia’s plain packaging laws, and the investment disputes brought by Philip Morris companies against Australia and Uruguay. Additionally, the workshop facilitated the sharing of information among alumni on their successes and challenges encountered in the development of tobacco control laws and policies, and in defending legal challenges to tobacco control laws.

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

**GGTC selected as partner in Bloomberg Philanthropies’ STOP project**

The Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products (STOP) competition, launched by Bloomberg Philanthropies in March 2018, selected Global Centre for Good Governance in Tobacco Control (GGTC), the Knowledge Hub for Article 5.3, together with two other partners, Tobacco Control Research Group of the University of Bath and The Union with the subgrantee Vital Strategies, to lead STOP, the global tobacco industry watchdog. The project aims to set up a global monitoring system that can be used to identify industry deception and industry’s tactics to undermine tobacco control.

**Guide for Parties to the WHO FCTC on How to Conduct Industry Monitoring**

Under the support and guidance of the Convention Secretariat, the Knowledge Hub for Article 5.3 elaborated and published a guide for Parties on how to conduct industry monitoring, in September 2018.

This publication is intended to serve as a guide to assist Parties in their efforts to strengthen monitoring of tobacco industry activities and provides a step-by-step instruction on preparations needed to set up tobacco industry observatories and monitoring centers.

The guide is available at the following link:

Handbook on Implementation of WHO FCTC Article 5.3

In its efforts to strengthen implementation of WHO FCTC Article 5.3 and its Guidelines, the KH updated in October 2018 the Handbook on Implementation of WHO FCTC Article 5.3, the first edition of which was published in February 2018. Aiming to raise awareness of international instruments that Parties can use to support domestic implementation of the treaty provision, the handbook summarizes country-level practices and policies on Article 5.3 implementation around the world and lists the progress the global community has made in countering tobacco industry's efforts at the regional or global level.

The handbook is available at:


Training Module on Article 5.3

The KH designed a customizable training module on Article 5.3, which is available by making a direct request to the KH. The module includes exercises and tools on a range of topics, such as developing a code of conduct, requiring information from the tobacco industry, and raising awareness about tobacco industry interference.

Please contact the KH for more information: https://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/article-53/contact-us/

Technical Assistance to Parties

Throughout 2018, the KH provided direct technical assistance to Parties and partners upon request. For example, the KH assisted countries in South-East Asian Region in preparing a civil society report on Tobacco Industry Interference Index and provided technical support in the design of a regional workshop in Eastern Mediterranean Region on implementing Article 5.3.

Other Technical Activities

In January 2019, GGTC prepared a technical brief revealing the nature of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World. The brief, which highlights FCTC Article 5.3, was circulated to the 34 WHO Executive Board members and civil society groups.

The technical brief is available at:
https://ggtc.world/dmdocuments/Brief%20Final%20FSFW%202019%20pub%20v3.pdf
GGTC raised awareness on FCTC Article 5.3 during a session it co-organized on "Addressing Commercial Determinants of Health (CDH): Friends and Foes for NCD Prevention and Control," at the Prince Mahidol Award Conference (PMAC) in Bangkok, Thailand on 29 January 2019. PMAC, an annual international conference on policy-related health issues, is one of the largest forums in global health attended by policymakers, senior officers, and staff of national bodies, including the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and other relevant agencies, civil society organizations, international organizations and development partners, universities, and industries.

WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on International Cooperation

Workshop on maximizing transparency of COP delegations

Under the support of the Ministry of Health of Panama, the Knowledge Hub on International Cooperation organized a workshop on 4-6 June 2018 in Panama City. With an aim to support Parties in their preparation for the COP, the workshop discussed a proposal of decision on maximizing the transparency of the delegations to the COP.

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 is carrying out a project targeting these groups of people. The project aims to provide technical assistance to Parties in the integration of tobacco cessation activities with other comorbidities' programmes, such as those on HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. The preparation work of this project initiated in 2018 and the implementation is taking place during the first half of 2019.

Joint Activities

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

World Conference on Tobacco or Health (WCTOH)
The 17th World Conference on Tobacco or Health (WCTOH) was held in Cape Town, South Africa on 7-9 March 2018. Representatives from several KHs attended the conference and presented in multiple sessions, introducing the work and achievements of the KHs and disseminating knowledge in their respective areas.

To further raise awareness of the work and available technical support provided by the KHs, the KH on Legal Challenges and the KH on Taxation jointly set up an exhibition booth at the WCTOH.

Third Meeting of the WHO FCTC Knowledge Hubs

On the sidelines of the WCTOH, the Convention Secretariat convened a collaboration meeting of its KHs on 10 March 2018. The meeting was kindly hosted by the Knowledge Hub on Taxation. Representatives from KHs discussed opportunities for more research collaboration between KHs, issues related to tobacco industry interference, and how to facilitate implementation of the WHO FCTC Articles by the Parties.

In addition, the KHs adopted and issued a statement on the Foundation for a Smoke-free World, declaring their commitment to act in the spirit of Article 5.3 and its Guidelines in carrying out their activities.
**Upcoming Events**

- **Online Course on Smokeless Tobacco – WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Smokeless Tobacco**

  This online course is organized by the Knowledge Hub on Smokeless Tobacco at Indian Council of Medical Research – National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research India (ICMR-NICPR), in collaboration with Tobacco Control Research Branch (TCRB) at National Cancer Institute (NCI), and is offered at no additional cost to individuals and groups who are interested. Through the course, the students will develop an in-depth understanding of SLT epidemic, tactics of tobacco industry, and methods for public communication, and will be equipped with skills to support the development, implementation and evaluation of effective SLT control policy.

  Interested persons are encouraged to apply to the limited places through the website of the KH-SLT before the deadline of **28 March 2019**. Link to registration is available here: [http://ssofttech.net/sltcourse/apply.php](http://ssofttech.net/sltcourse/apply.php).

- **9th International Legal Training Course – WHO FCTC Secretariat’s Knowledge Hub on Legal Challenges**

  In the month of May, the KH on Legal Challenges will organize the ninth edition of the International Legal Training Course, consisting of an intensive 3-week training course conducted twice a year at the McCabe Centre in Melbourne, Australia, and follow-up information-sharing and support. Participants are selected in coordination with the WHO FCTC Secretariat, WHO headquarters and regional and country offices.

  For further information on the Program, please contact Samantha Robertson ([Samantha.Robertson@cancervic.org.au](mailto:Samantha.Robertson@cancervic.org.au)), Office Manager.

- **Fourth meeting of the WHO FCTC Knowledge Hubs’ managers**

  The managers/directors of the seven WHO FCTC Knowledge Hubs will meet in a management meeting on 13-14 May 2019 in Thailand. The meeting is kindly hosted by the KH for Article 5.3. The meeting will provide, as usual, a platform for information exchange and mutual learning, with a final aim to increase efficiency of the work of and the coordination between the hubs, in order to continue improving the support provided to the WHO FCTC Parties in their implementation of the Convention.
The Secretariat will continue 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 KHz, please contact the hubs directly or Dr. Tibor Szilágyi from the Convention Secretariat at szilagyit@who.int.