

Report of the WFPHA Tobacco Control Program for 2008

International Tobacco Control is in a transition period, where almost all of the 168 countries having signed the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) have also ratified it (number of ratifications as of end of March, 2009: 164, covering 86% of the World population), but where in most countries, implementation of the legal changes demanded by the FCTC is lagging behind. WHO as well as other internationally active organizations and agencies have adapted to this situation and are inviting interested countries to join in the next phases of tobacco control.


In May, 2008, following the General Assembly in Geneva, a delegation of more than a dozen representatives of WFPHA member associations met with Dr. Douglas Bettcher (WHO's Tobacco Free Initiative and empower project) to discuss possible involvements of PHAs in the new phase of tobacco control. Contacts with Dr. Bettcher were continued through the year and led to planning a session on global tobacco control at the 12th World Congress on Public Health in Istanbul in 2009.

Also, in order to optimally fit a further tobacco-related session for the Istanbul Congress to membership interests, all WFPHA member associations were included in a questionnaire survey conducted jointly by the Canadian Public Health Association and the WFPHA Tobacco Control Program, to which 15 responses were received – all of the responding PHAs having been actively involved in tobacco control. Between 60 and 86% of respondents had been actively involved in advocacy (73%), organization of workshops or conferences (80%), joined a coalition on tobacco and smoking (66%), had organized a public awareness campaign about tobacco (86%), or conducted a survey or research study on tobacco (60%). Interest in a skills building workshop was biggest on Advocacy for smoke-free environments, Smoking prevention/cessation among youth and Monitoring the application of the FCTC in the country. The idea of conducting a membership survey on a particular topic was generally appreciated, but hopefully, future surveys will profit from a higher participation rate.

From October 20-25 2008, representatives from over 150 countries having ratified the FCTC met in Geneva to develop a *Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products*. Scores of representatives from the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) and its member NGOs including the WFPHA participated and contributed significantly to the quality of the discussions.

Supported by the Canadian Public Health Association, several African Public Health Associations also participated at the third session of the FCTC Conference of the Parties (COP-3), held in Durban, South Africa on 17-22 November 2008. Guidelines for implementation of several articles of the FCTC were adopted, as were rules on limitation of contacts with the tobacco industry. Work in progress was reviewed. A summary of the results of this meeting is available at http://www.fctc.org/dmdocuments/COP3_outcomes_en.pdf.

The WFPHA Tobacco Control Program is in a transition period as well. The present Chair intends to step down after having led the Program since its inception in 1998. In correspondence and personal conversations, plans were discussed for adapting the Program to the new challenges of worldwide tobacco control, and preparations were made for an informal lunch side-meeting during the Congress to discuss the future need and role for a tobacco control group or program. Those interested in joining this meeting are asked to contact the WFPHA Secretariat or abelin@tele2.ch.



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