



Coalition For Tobacco Control - Pak



Journalists Orientation Meeting Coalition for Tobacco Control – Pakistan Report Jan 2009

Society for Alternative Media and Research (SAMAR) is an advocacy based organization working on a project “**Development & Implementation Of Tobacco Control Policies Project in Pakistan**” under a grant approved by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK). The purpose of this project is to bring the tobacco control statutes in Pakistan to conform to FCTC provisions through monitoring those already developed and promulgated, lobbying for those not in place and assisting Federal Ministry of Health (MoH) in drafting new legislations as in Pakistan international treaties need to be translated into national laws to be enforceable.

As an objective of additional activities, SAMAR through its Coalition for Tobacco Control – Pakistan (CTC-Pak) is to organize media sensitization meetings with media persons on the issue of tobacco control in Pakistan during the second phase of the project.

A meeting was organized on January 05, 2009 at Islamabad, Pakistan which was participated by representatives of Tobacco Control Implementation Cell (TCI), Federal Ministry of Health, World Health Organisation (WHO), International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (UNION) and journalists from major national newspapers of the country.

CTC-Pak briefed the history of tobacco control in Pakistan and status of FCTC and role of Pakistan in tobacco control in light of tobacco ordinance promulgated by the Government of Pakistan in 2003.





The key issues focused during the meeting were lack of enough space for tobacco control issues in the media and responsibility of media to raise awareness as a part of holistic approach to its readers.

SAMAR presented a document, Media Watch on Tobacco Control in Pakistan, a compilation of news items related to tobacco control issues that have appeared in the year 2008. It was brought under the notice of participants that how less the issue was high lighted in media last year but whenever it has been reported it made an impact upon its audience including policy makers.

Only four percent of the total space on the front and back pages of six leading national newspapers monitored were dedicated to all social issues including tobacco control as against 50% space designated to political news and advertisement. SAMAR asserted for change in this trend.

There is a need for media persons to properly understand the theme of tobacco control and their responsibility as media is the most effective tool that can make a difference and educate people of various age groups.

The participants took keen interest in the discussion and there was an understanding that the tobacco industry is too much influential. The focus of the industry is to restore its image by influencing policy makers, seeking support of various health and environment organizations, promoting its products by launching extensive media campaigns and sponsoring local folk festivals. It was also pointed out that intention of tobacco industry is also to create divisions with in the journalists and to malign some who write in the favour of 100% smokefree environment.





The obstacles identified during the discussions were lack of proper knowledge on the issue and availability of latest information on tobacco control.

Representatives of TCI and WHO asserted the need of active role of media for effective implementation of existing legislation by understanding and writing more on the issues of public health and tobacco control. WHO briefed the participants about MPOWER, a tool for implementation of FCTC and how local media can use it to create informative news items.

TCI explained the status of implemented legislation and appreciated the role media had played since the activation of the TCI Cell. TCI stressed CTC-Pak and media to monitor unethical tactics and continue reporting violations of tobacco industry.

It was recommended in the meeting that Federal Ministry of Health should take policy decisions prohibiting any health related activity which has tobacco industry act as a partner or sponsored to. Any interactions between the industry and government should be made public and reported in media for public information. The media itself should report if the tobacco industry approaches the media for its product promotion or any other unethical tactic. Representative from WHO and CTC-Pak assured their support to the participants condemning any initiative taken by the industry against media or their campaign for public awareness regarding the hazards of tobacco control.

