

***WORKSHOP***  
**ON TOBACCO CONTROL POLICY**

**FINAL REPORT**

Yerevan, Armenia  
2 March 2007

## Summary

**Background.** On March 2, 2007 the American University of Armenia hosted the Second National Meeting of the Coalition for Tobacco Free Armenia (CTFA). The Coalition was formed in June 11, 2004 and is a voluntary union of currently 25 NGOs (<http://www.tobaccofreearmenia.am>). This meeting was dedicated to the second anniversary of the ratification of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and the enactment of RoA Law “On restrictions of tobacco sale, consumption and use”.

The last few years were a time of tangible changes in tobacco control legislation and public movement. The main purpose of the meeting was to report on activities of the Coalition for Tobacco Free Armenia and to discuss the role of civil society in future enhancement of tobacco control policies.

As a part of the 2nd National Meeting of CTFA, the Armenian Public Health Alliance organized a Workshop on Tobacco Control Policy with support from the Open Society Institute.

**Aim of the Workshop.** The Workshop aimed to present the country report on FCTC and the national tobacco control strategy and the civil society’s role in its development and implementation.

**Place, Time and Format.** Workshop was organized at the American University of Armenia (AUA) on March 2, 2007. The plenary session was followed by discussion in two working groups divided by topics of interest. One of the working groups discussed the policy aspects of the tobacco control in Armenia; the other group focused on monitoring and evaluation issues.

**Participants.** The workshop organizers invited representatives from different fields, governmental and international agencies, non-governmental organizations, practitioners and researchers.

**Panel discussion and work in groups.** Dr. Varduhi Petrosyan, Director of the Center of Health Services Research and Development, facilitated the panel discussion. The panelists were Mr. Suren Krmoyan, Legal adviser to the Minister of Health, Dr. Alexander Bazarchyan, Tobacco Control Program Coordinator, Ministry of Health, Ms. Elinar Vardanyan, Executive Director, Center for Public Dialogue and Development. The panelists presented their viewpoints on developments in the national tobacco control policy in Armenia that took place after the accession to the FCTC. Participants continued the discussion in two working groups on different aspects of the national tobacco control strategy and the role of civil society in the policy implementation and further improvement. The results from the workgroups were presented to participants during the closing session.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations.**

The participants reported low awareness and compliance with the existing legal restrictions on tobacco use and sale among population and state officials. However, implementing more public awareness campaigns will not make a difference without an accurate monitoring of implementation of tobacco control measures. Continuous monitoring of the policy implementation will assist in suggesting further changes in the current legislation to make it more effective and enforceable.

The participants of the Workshop emphasized that in two years since the Law “On Restrictions of Tobacco Sale, Consumption and Use” entered into force, no body(ies) has been assigned the responsibility to this law (as implied by the Article 12, point 2).

The Workshop participants expressed satisfaction with the state support to Armenian NGOs for implementation of anti-smoking projects. However, the participants noted the need of strengthening the capacities of non-governmental organizations and suggested to organize an expert group to develop evidence-based methodology to assist the civil society in monitoring activities.

Participants also stressed the need for enhancing participation of local governing bodies in policy enforcement (by suggesting respective amendments to the Law on local governance) and inclusion of tobacco control topic in educational curricula of civil servants and schools.

## **Work in groups.**

### **Group 1. Working Group on Policy /Policy Enforcement**

#### **Discussion questions**

What are the most important achievements in the legislative area in Armenia?

What are the major gaps in the Armenian tobacco control legislation (as compared to the FCTC requirements)?

Do we have enforcement measures? If yes, do they work? If no, why?

Which agency should have the responsibility to control the implementation of anti-tobacco measures?

What is the role of anti-tobacco movement in the policy enforcement?

What should be recommended?

#### **List of Participants**

Aghuzumtsyan Ruben, “Psychological Association” NGO

Avetisyan Aida, “Development Principles” NGO

Darbinyan Nellie, “Health education association” NGO

Ganashyan Geghanush, “Community Development and Social Support” NGO

Gasparyan Khachatur, “ACPP” NGO

Gezalyan Naira, “Armenian Public Health Union” NGO

Gyurjyan Gayane, “Revival and Progress” NGO

Harutyunan Lusine, “Healthy generation of mountaineers” NGO

Iskoyan Aida, EPAC

Janibekyan Zara, “Open Medical Club” NGO

Margaryan Petros, “Armenian Public Health Union” NGO

Matevosyan Karina, “Development Principles” NGO

Movsisyan Karine, “Goris Youth Union” NGO

Petrosyan Varduhi, American University of Armenia (AUA)

Sahakyan Karine, AUA

Seferyan Nazareth, “ARPA” NGO

#### **Facilitator**

Margaryants Hovhannes, Armenian Public Health Union

#### **Discussion**

The following points were made during the discussion:

- ✓ The most important achievements in the area of tobacco control in Armenia are the ratification of FCTC and adoption of RA Law “On limitations of tobacco sale, consumption and use”.
- ✓ The major problem in the Armenian tobacco control is the implementation of the policy: the lack of enforcement results in frequent violations of the existing legislation. The workgroup participants suggested to give institutions of local

governance the responsibility to enforce the legislation using monitoring and punitive measures.

- ✓ The absence of tobacco control policy enforcement mechanisms can be explained by the influence of tobacco industry on legislative processes via the industry lobby. Besides, a significant proportion of policymakers and state officials are smokers themselves and are not personally interested in the enforcement of anti-tobacco law. Therefore, business interest and lack of political will greatly contribute to the current situation.
- ✓ Another factor hindering the implementation of tobacco control policies is the absence of anti-smoking culture in Armenia.
- ✓ It is necessary to create an interdisciplinary agency (inspectorate), which will function under the state authority. It will monitor the policy enforcement and implementation in different fields, including a fire prevention department, or SanEpi department, or a special monitoring unit in the educational institutions.
- ✓ On the other hand, marzpetarans (institutions of local governance) should be able to perform monitoring through their departments (education, health and other). Marzpetarans can have their monitoring working groups. This monitoring mechanism might be piloted in one marz and then implemented nationwide.
- ✓ An alternative suggestion was made to have one monitoring body that would act nationwide.
- ✓ It is necessary to establish both state and non-governmental structures for monitoring, because the NGO community has capacities to perform effective monitoring. NGOs are closer to people and they can serve as the most effective advocates for the law implementation, and also educate public on the issue.
- ✓ The NGOs can work with the Parliament to strengthen the existing tobacco control legislation. Opportunities for such collaboration are evident given the state support to NGOs in tobacco control. This policy discussion is an example of such collaboration; it brought together representatives of the government, NGOs, and research institutions.

## **Conclusions**

- The ratification of FCTC and the adoption of Law of RA on Limitations of Tobacco Realization, Consumption and Usage are the most important achievements and bring a positive long-term perspective to the issue of tobacco control in Armenia. However, clear and effective enforcement mechanisms needed for the implementation of the policy are not available.

## **Recommendations**

- Along with anti-tobacco campaigns, NGOs should monitor the policy implementation, and results of the monitoring should be used for further improvement of legislation.
- Enhance NGOs capacities by establishing a working group with proper capacities to make scientifically sound recommendations on monitoring methodology.
- Propose legislative changes to enhance the responsibilities of local government in monitoring and implementation of the tobacco control legislation.
- Integrate tobacco control issues in educational curricula in schools and civilian servants.
- Strengthen the national policy promoting healthy lifestyle in general and, in particular, opening/renovating sporting facilities for youth.

## **Group 2: Working Group on Monitoring/Evaluation**

### **Discussion questions**

What are the strengths and the weaknesses of the State Tobacco Control Program (STCP)?

What is the role of civil society in the policy monitoring?

What could be the criteria for monitoring and evaluation of the policy (including STCP) implementation?

What should be recommended?

### **List of Participants**

Avagyan Avag, “Haghartsin” NGO

Badalyan Khachatur, “Union of people with removed chords”

Baghdasaryan Lilit, “Sustainable Water Environment” NGO

Changer Sara, Peace Corp

Esayan Victoria, “Psychological Association” NGO

Gabrielyan Svetlana, family physician

Ghukasyan Anahit, “Verelk” NGO

Ghukasyan Karine, “Healthy life” NGO

Grigoryan Gajane, family physician

Hakobyan Yelena, “Verelk” NGO

Hovsepyan Lusine, family physician

Kentenyants Karine, Armenian Red Cross

Khurshudyan Nune, “Psychological Association” NGO  
Martirosyan Hrachia, “Hayastan ” newspaper  
Marukyan Edmon, “Youth Center for Democracy Initiative” NGO  
Movrovyan Anahit, family physician  
Papikyan Anahit, OSI  
Petrosyan Garegin, “Community Development and Social Support” NGO  
Poghosyan Heghine, American University of Armenia (AUA)  
Saghatelyan Arusyak, family physician  
Sargsyan Varsenik, “Health and Wealth” NGO  
Tshmarityan Marina, “Verelk” NGO  
Tsvetkova Valentina, family physician  
Vardanyan Heghine, family physician  
Vardanyan Olga, International Center for Human Development (ICHHD)

### **Facilitators**

Narine Movsisyan, AUA  
Alexander Bazarchyan, MOH, Tobacco Control Program

### **Discussion**

The following points were made during the discussion:

- ✓ The participants emphasized the role of NGOs in the implementation of State Tobacco Control Program and the law.
- ✓ The weaknesses of the State Tobacco Control Program include: a) lack of awareness about the program; and b) lack of evaluation mechanisms and criteria.
- ✓ The NGOs were supported by the state to implement monitoring programs.
- ✓ The working group made a suggestion to draft a law (in cooperation with respective structures in the Parliament) that would regulate the implementation and monitoring of the current anti-tobacco policy.
- ✓ There is no need to replace the state bodies on monitoring activities, but there is a need to facilitate these activities through the NGO sector and get support from the state budget, as everyone is responsible for the implementation of the law.
- ✓ The NGOs can more effectively work with people and raise public awareness on the issues. The monitoring experience of NGOs demonstrated that awareness on tobacco control law was very low. For example, the school teachers who are dealing with children and even teaching about healthy lifestyles are not aware of the tobacco control law.

- ✓ “CDSS” NGO (Gyumri, Shirak marz) implemented an anti-tobacco program in Gyumri and came to a conclusion that there is need to work with the public to increase their awareness and improve the attitudes towards tobacco control policies. The law among population and it is also important to disseminate information about the tobacco control policy. The print media and the TV have their crucial role in this process. Media can also attract public attention to the violations of law. The absence of policy monitoring mechanisms and monitoring institutions is a big obstacle to proper implementation of tobacco-control policies.
- ✓ A survey conducted by the “Psychological Association” NGO showed that warning texts and labels on cigarette packs are not effective in their present appearance. It is important to provide information to increase awareness of people and to develop new, more effective warning texts. It is also important to pay special attention to the advertisement and anti- advertisement of tobacco products.
- ✓ The “Youth Center for Democracy Initiative” NGO’s representative talked about lack of public awareness on tobacco control policies. It is important to inform people about the policy to give them opportunity to demand the policy implementation.
- ✓ Working group participants presented cases when thanks to actions taken by NGO representatives, the violations of the law stopped (cases with billboard advertisement and vending machines).

## **Conclusions**

- There is a lack of information about anti-tobacco programs. This meeting was an important opportunity for NGOs to be informed about the activities of each other in this area.
- NGO experience in implementation of tobacco control programs in 2005-2006 show that the Law “On restrictions of tobacco sale, consumption and use” is not being properly implemented. There is a lack of awareness about the law provisions. The awareness is low not only among the population but also among the law implementers (responsible agencies and persons).
- Current legislation lacks respective points about the monitoring of tobacco control policy and tobacco control program. No mechanisms of monitoring of the policy implementation are identified in the current policy.

## **Recommendations**

- There is a need for changes in current legislation. The Law should specify which body(ies) are responsible for law implementation, as well as their liabilities. The

enforcement mechanisms should be specified and firmly stated in the law, and should include administrative (for example, canceling a commercial license) and financial (fines) measures to address violations of the law.

- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be maintained through both administrative and public activities as well as imply criminal responsibility.