

National Tobacco Control Program Strategic Plan for the coming year 2009-2011

Promote the passage of the drafting TC policies consistent with the FCTC and effective strengthening of the national TC program.

A.1.1 Summary

Tobacco use is widely spread and of epidemic proportions in Lebanon. Almost half of adult males and 35% of females is currently smoker. Lebanon has the weakest tobacco control laws in the region; even those poorly enforced. Despite such obstacles Lebanon has ratified the FCTC.

In response to the ratification, the Parliamentary Health Committee (PHC) and the MOPH has drafted a tobacco controls laws and not yet passed based on the FCTC, with a ban on all advertising; ban smoking in public spaces, and health warnings. Recently, MOPH and PHC filed three amendments regarding some "weak" points of these draft laws

Our project is intended to advocate for amendment, passage and enforcement of these drafting laws, and strengthen a sustainable tobacco control program in MOPH. We believe this will lead to create political momentum to support a broad-based public constituency to pass and enforce a strong TC laws

A.2.1 Objectives

The overall purpose of the project is to advocate and lobby especially among legislators and policy makers on the existing drafting laws and for the amendments particularly in the areas of expanded health warnings, restraints on advertising, bans on smoking in enclosed public spaces, passage, and enforcement of these drafting laws in consistent to the FCTC, and strengthens a sustainable tobacco control program in the Ministry of Public Health.

The measurable objectives will include:

1. To **reactivate the multisectoral steering committee** to guide the national tobacco control program, for continues monitoring and sustainability of the project and outcome in the long term, chaired by the Ministry of Public Health, which include country stakeholders
2. To **advocate and lobby for the amendment, passage, and enforcement** of new tobacco control laws consistent to the FCTC.
3. To **increase public awareness in promoting tobacco control** policies with particular focus on harmful effects of SHS, economic benefits of the implementation of 100% smoke-free policy through a mass media campaign, advocacy workshops promoting tobacco control policies.

4. To **evaluate and monitor the enforcement of tobacco control laws** through measurement of air quality and provide judicial relief when violated, as carried out by the ministry of interior and Municipalities.
5. To **counteract standard tobacco industry's arguments** opposing the law (e.g., tobacco and health controversy, economic loss of hospitality venues, smoker's discrimination, sponsoring etc.)
6. To consolidate a credible NGOs **networking (Capacity Building)** as an important player in the development, implementation and monitoring of tobacco control measures.

A.2.2 Context, available resources and partners

Describe the context in which the project will take place, the resources you already have available and any recent action taken on the issue/s that the project will address. This should include brief details of the contribution of any confirmed partners in the project.

Tobacco use is a major problem in Lebanon; smoking is excessively accepted and widely encouraged in the society, schools are not smoke-free and most hospitals are still not smoke-free. Over half of adults smoke, with prevalence among women only somewhat less than men. The 2005 GYTS revealed similar result. Smoking in public places is ubiquitous; exposure to secondhand smoke commonplace.

In 1995 the Parliament passed Lebanon's only tobacco control law, in two parts: one requiring a miniscule 'health warning,' 15% of any print and billboard advertising, and on packages; the second against sampling to minors. Neither is much enforced. The tobacco industry has had virtual free-hand in marketing its products, including methods considered outrageous elsewhere. Lebanon is the only country in the Middle East that allows cigarette advertising on television which reaches consumers in other Middle East countries and the Arab community around the world. Nonetheless, by ratifying the FCTC on 7 December 2005, Lebanon declared willingness to participate in the global effort. Unfortunately; and after the assassination of previous prime minister Rafic Hariri in February 2005, the country entered in so called "Political Paralysis". Since then Lebanese Parliament committees never met to discuss any new legislation.

In collaboration with the PHC, MOPH has drafted a new law based on the FCTC. Four major aspects of the law are a progressive ban on all tobacco advertising in mass media; ban on smoking in closed public spaces, health warnings and sales to minors. Provisions for enforcement are less than ideal. A weak law will remain on the books for years after and it may still be improved, therefore; last week the prevention unit in MOPH in collaboration with PHC proposed 3 amendments on the drafting laws addressing speed elimination of tobacco ads, banning tobacco ad on the internet, including the 40% health warning not only on cigarette packs, but on all tobacco products including cigarette box containing 10 packs. These amendments has been signed by the Minister of Health and

the president of the PHC and sent to the Administration and Justice committee for discussion and endorsement which is the final stage prior final approval in the Parliamentarian General Assembly. This project proposal will provide an opportunity for major efforts in lobbying policy makers and mobilization of public opinion to push for the draft legislation to be strengthened, passed, and most importantly, enforced. It is expected that substantive engagement by the MOPH in this grant will create a sustained commitment to tobacco control.

A study for the country key stakeholders, for and against tobacco control, indicates receptivity to these measures. Overall, interviewees understood that smoking was a problem for the Lebanese in terms of health, and financial loss for government and society. Most interviewees agreed that mobilization of popular opinion is essential. Additional interviews with ordinary citizens showed majority support for elements of the draft legislation. All surveyed agreed that enforcement and political backup are essential, and require lessening of tobacco industry influence.

The partners in this project, Parliamentarian Health Committee (PHC), Ministry of Interior and Municipality (MOI) and the Tobacco control NGO -- comprise the rich resources available to this project: combining government action, policy analysis, and citizen activism. While each partner has worked with the others on various programs, this project brings all their expertness to bear in a funded and integrated effort.

The Prevention Unit in the MOPH has led the efforts for tobacco control since 1998 when the National Tobacco Control Program (NTCP) began. Despite considerable opposition from the tobacco industry and its allies, and with little funding, the NTCP under leadership of the Prevention Unit managed to keep tobacco control in public view with education campaigns, surveillance, lobbying for ratification of the FCTC, and draft legislation. NTCP will lead the effort from the MOPH side.

PHC has a proven record in promoting tobacco control in Lebanon, the contributions mission is to enhance policy debate among decision-making in Lebanon through exchange of knowledge and opinion between legislators, members of parliament, and government officials. The president of this committee is Dr. Atif Majdalani (received WHO award for the contribution to FCTC ratification) was actively involved in developing the draft laws.

Ministry of Interior and Municipality (MOI) and through it jurisdiction will contribute on enactment and continuous enforcement of the tobacco control legislations in particular the smoke free law in public places, governmental buildings and on enforcing banning of tobacco adds and selling tobacco products to minors. Moreover; the current Minister of Interior, a founder member of the Lebanese NGO "Tobacco Free Initiative", provides an opportunity for major efforts in lobbying to push for the draft legislation to be strengthened, passed, and most importantly, enforced.

The mission of Tobacco control NGO's, Lebanese Order of Physician, Lebanese Society of Cardiology, Lebanese Society of Medical Oncology and academia is to enhance public

policy debate and decision making in Lebanon through exchange of knowledge and opinion between academics, civil society, and government.

A.2.3 Strategies and activities

Provide details of the strategies and activities that the project will engage in order to achieve its objectives.

We envisage a two-year, highly visible campaign that will proceed via six intersecting and mutually-reinforcing strategies:

The first objective is **to establish a multi-sectoral National Tobacco Control Committee (NTCC)** who's Secretariat will be housed in the MOPH, and chaired by its Minister. This high-level placement will help assure sustainability. Members should include Parliamentarians from the key committees that pass on tobacco control legislation; influential representatives from key ministries, academia, order of physicians, cardiologists, oncologists, NGOs working in tobacco control at the grass-roots level; and other influential persons from local municipalities, in the media, medicine, the arts, business, and religion institutions who would support tobacco control. Ministerial members of the NTCC would be instrumental in lobbying Members of Parliament (MPs)

The second objective is **to advocate and lobby for the amendment, passage, and enforcement of draft tobacco control laws** consistent to the FCTC. In this overall strategy the NTCC membership and influential persons from the public and private sectors with policy and political analyses will summaries of current evidence-based practices in tobacco control; also includes the search for relevant information on previous surveys, such as GYTS, environmental pollution assessment, evaluation of the economic impact on the hospitality industry, health impact of SHS.

The third objective would be to **increase public awareness in promoting tobacco control policies**, will includes a strong media advocacy component with the identification of good message, reviewing successful campaigns from other countries. The campaign will have two interrelated components one "Educational Campaign" the second is "Reinforcement of the Law Campaign". Further, the NTCP will take the lead in commissioning key analyses, conducting workshops, seminars and discussions helping create a new national constituency of individuals and institutions across many governmental and non governmental sectors to support and sustain tobacco control, even beyond the current draft legislation.

The forth objective will focus on the process of **monitoring the enforcement** of tobacco control laws through measurement of air quality using the side-pack machine both to compare smoking to non-smoking areas as a demonstration to policy makers and the public, as well as in documenting violations. Moreover, penalties include fines for both smokers and owners or managers of the places where violation takes place, not only in

respect of smoking in public places but in all the violation of the tobacco control policies will be carried out by the ministry of interior.

The fifth objective is **counteracting Tobacco Industry efforts** to undermine the implementation of tobacco control legislations through lobbying Bars, Restaurants Associations and mass media with typical arguments: smoker's rights, freedom, economic impact, ventilation, accommodation, smuggling and courtesy of choice strategy.

The final objective is to **strengthen capacity and networking among advocates** as tobacco control NGOs, academia, legal, media and medical communities; commissioning studies, reports and surveys; including smoke-free environments advocacy training. The creation of this national collation will facilitate the sustainability and visibility of the changing process.

The proposed activities for each strategy are as follows:

- I. **Establish a multi-sectoral National Tobacco Control Committee (NTCC) with a Secretariat housed in the MOPH, chaired by the Minister of Health**
 - a. Establish a dedicated MOPH tobacco control office, **furnished, equipped and staffed.**
 - b. **Hire project staffs**, which include program manager (vast experience in Tobacco Control is required), a communications person, part-time research assistance and administrative support (secretarial, accounting, IT). It has already identified several people who have been involved in tobacco control.
 - c. Identify those key Ministries and major stakeholder groups that can potentially support the cause of tobacco control (NGOs, women's organizations, the private sector, sports, religious leaders, medical societies, influential media persons, among others), and invite each to nominate a member for the **NTCC**.
 - d. Hold **quarterly meetings** of the NTCC, beginning within one month after the start of the project.
 - e. With assistance from PHC, NGOs and others in order to generate maximum coverage hold a **press conference** to launch the project at the time of the first NTCC meeting.
 - f. **Consult Legal Advisor** and the current Minister of Interior as lawyer and active tobacco control activist for final wording of tobacco control laws.
- II. **NTCC membership will advocate and lobby for the amendment, passage, and enforcement of new tobacco control laws especially among Parliamentarians, selected leaders of communities and organizations, and the media.**

- a. Work with Parliamentary Administration and Justice Committee to review and **revise draft legislation including the three amendments** which has been developed by MOPH, PHC and the endorsement of the Minister of Interior.
- b. Conduct **two workshops** on tobacco control for Parliamentarians in collaboration with the PHC, Administration and Justice committee and UNDP Parliamentarian Office "support to legislatures program", one preceding the period of presentation of new laws (from March 15 to May 31) first term of Parliamentarian general assembly, and the second workshop in October for monitoring the progress preceding the second term general assembly (from October 14 to December 31).
- c. Publish **quarterly newsletters** for Parliamentarians and stakeholders with news of progress and other relevant information.
- d. Continue to **hold meetings** with officials, MPs and legislators to document concrete problems with draft laws, improve appropriate amendments and explore other options. (We believes 100% smoke-free can be achieved gradually in one year)
- e. NTCP in Prevention unit and staffs conducts continuous lobbying and information activities for MPs and NTCC members.
- f. Conduct advocacy, partnership and collaboration two days workshop on the project strategy, objectives and activities to all tobacco control NGO's, media, academics and professionals.
- g. At the outset NTCP **commissions three studies** with a three-month turn-around (in full form and single-page digest version for wider distribution) on the following topics: Effect of bans on tobacco advertising bans on the media industry and alternative sources of business; benefits to the health of Lebanese and the health system of reduced tobacco use; potential impact of pending tobacco control laws on the general economy and government revenues. (The issue of taxation will be broached to generate discussion; it is not yet in any draft legislation.)
- h. **Data from air monitoring environmental survey** in indoor public places with a Side-Pak machine, a portable real-time air pollution monitors, in key areas after the enforcement of the smoke-free law will be compared with a similar survey completed one month ago (October 2008) where has been documented high mean concentration of particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5) > 346 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 40 venues bars, restaurants, retail outlets, hotel lobbies and hospital cafeterias in 6 geographically dispersed region. These results will be used to advocate and underscore the importance of a comprehensive smoke-free policy adoption in accordance with new laws

III. Increase public awareness in promoting tobacco control policies with particular focus on harmful effects of SHS, economic benefits of the implementation of 100% smoke-free policy through a mass media campaign, regional advocacy workshops promoting tobacco control policies.

- a. **To develop and launch a strong mass media advocacy campaign** sustainable during the entire project. The campaign will be sustained throughout the entire project to keep the public engaged, tailoring the campaign to the local reality. The campaign will have two interrelated components:

- i. The first component will be an "**Educational Campaign**" with an emphasis on the health consequences due to the exposure to second hand tobacco smoke and also with information on the health benefits (protection to nonsmokers and employees, de-normalization of smoking, discouragement of initiation among youth), and economic benefits due to the implementation of smoke-free policies. Visual materials would include the following (but not exhaustive) list:
- Brochures to inform public about critical issues related to tobacco control policy: 30000 units.
 - Fact sheets: 100000 units.
 - Posters and ads to locate in public places: 4500 units.
 - Posters and billboards on public transportation (buses and taxis): 3500 units.
 - Billboards (university schools, shopping malls, bus station, airport, municipal district centers, theatres, museums, cinemas, colleges, hospitals): 50 units
 - Two waves in a year of TV and radio of "Educational Campaign" inspired from international campaign. Some air time health messages are free
 - Ashtrays with poster located at the entrance of strategic public places inviting people to extinguish their cigarettes: 50 units.

We also plan to develop a short booklet with practical guidelines on how to implement a smoke-free policy in private workplaces. We will offer technical assistance to the private companies that require information.

- ii. The second component will be a "**Reinforcement of the Law Campaign**" (6 month following passage of the TC laws) will include also TV and radio ads. Information about the successful stories around the world (e.g. Ireland, Italy...) will be publicized. Both components of the campaign will also provide information on smoking cessation courses offered free of charge. In addition, information will include the creating of a toll-free telephone number to report violations of the law. We are going to expand our website to include specific information on the campaign.

Special emphasis of these campaigns in specific public places such hospitals, hospitality venues (in particular cafes and nightclubs that could have less percentage of compliance) and the airport. The airport, considered as the main country "entrance gate" will be a place of focus.

- b. Develop and continue update in the MOPH **website** a page on relevant information about advocacy, legislation, tobacco industry national strategies, etc. as a link with other important International tobacco control web page.
- c. NTCP members will regularly **inform the general public** through op-ed newspaper columns, television interviews, and special news stories about: the

FCTC, results of parliamentary deliberations, implementation of the laws, and results of previous smoke air monitoring measurements in indoor public places.

- d. Establish a small- grants mechanism for NGO's to conduct quarterly **regional seminars** for individuals from specific sectors of the community who have not previously been informed about tobacco and its control such as the media, business leaders, youth leaders, religious leaders, municipal officials, artists, sports figures).

IV. Conducts monitoring of compliance with tobacco control laws and follow-up actions following passage of tobacco control laws

- a. Beginning three months after passage of the laws, the Ministry of Interior and Consumer's Right Office in the Ministry of Economics will begin inspections and provide local authorities with information on violations; as necessary, inform local media and the court system.
- b. Conduct smoke air monitoring environmental survey in indoor public places with a Side-Pak machine, portable real-time air pollution monitors, in 40 key areas.
- c. Inspectors from the MOI (Municipalities), Consumer's Right Office inspectors and MOPH (Health inspectors) will carry out their usual duties with respect to law enforcement. Once tobacco control laws are passed, assemble a training workshop for regional inspectors, along with coordinator central team.
- d. Creating of a toll-free telephone number to report violations of the law.

V. Counteract standard tobacco industry's arguments opposing the law

- ✓ NTCP will conduct rapid responses through the media to counter industry arguments against tobacco control (such as rights of smokers; economic loss to farmers and the advertising and hospitality sectors; doubts cast on the science of secondhand smoke, etc.) Rapid response will be achieved by press releases, briefing papers, newspaper columns, and TV interviews.
- ✓ Expose and challenge Tobacco industry strategies such as sponsoring of concerts, sports events, meetings etc in the media. Our draft laws will ban tobacco companies from sponsoring social and sport activities.
- ✓ Ministry of Interior will enforce the over mentioned laws as many of the concerts organized for youth in Lebanon have tobacco advertisements and stands that distribute cigarettes and associated products. Another strategy would be to have a counter advertising stand that states the real facts, talks about health effects, etc...
- ✓ Conduct tobacco industry demoralizing campaigns, using findings from tobacco industry relevant research. The campaign can highlight industry practices worldwide and at national level, particularly stressing on effect on vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women. Such campaigns can be developed by youth in schools or adults in NGO's.
- ✓ To arrange interview with bars and restaurants associations leaders, who are usually manipulated by tobacco industry, to give them scientific based evidence.

- ✓ Develop a monitoring tool and database that records and documents tobacco industry practices and use for advocacy. Data collected could be used by the Consumer Rights association to launch Campaigns.

VI. Strengthen capacity and networking among advocates

- i. Conduct **workshops with NGOs** working in tobacco control and with professional organizations (physicians, nurses, lawyers, etc) to introduce laws and legal obligations under FCTC, endorse, support and advocate.
- j. To develop a smoke-free Environment workshop for capacity building, contacting all NGOs working on tobacco control from different regions in Lebanon focused on enforcement of 100% smoke free indoor public places.
- k. To establish a database of members, allies and potential members. (This database will also include legislators and media contacts, academia for use in other parts of our strategy)

A.2.4 Evaluation

The evaluation of the project will be the primary responsibility of the Prevention unit National tobacco control Program as project partner and the project director. The project will rely on both impact and process evaluation. Passage of such laws will be evident in the governmental legal register once the law is given a number. Further impact will be demonstrated if these laws are enforced. Enforcement of such laws will be evident by legal challenges that are upheld by the court.

Evaluate the achievement of specific strategies and activities. Related to objective 1, the following indicators will be measured:

- ✓ The establishment of the NTCC by official letter of the Minister of Health.
- ✓ Minutes of the NTCC: at least seven minutes within the two year time frame of the project
- ✓ Documentation in the minutes of activities related to drafting of new/revised laws
- ✓ Press release stating the establishment and composition of the NTCC
- ✓ Records of the newsletters: at least seven newsletters printed
- ✓ Distribution list of the newsletters to include parliamentarians and stakeholder organizations
- ✓ Contract with legal advisor to assist with final wording of laws

Related to objective 2, the following indicators will be measured:

- ✓ Agenda, list of participants, and participant evaluation of the training sessions conducted for parliamentarians
- ✓ Text of dated progress reports to WHO, to press, WHO/EMRO, FCTC Conference of Parties.
- ✓ Schedule of public information events developed by the MOPH

- √ Three policy briefs and related single page digest version of: (i) Effect of bans on tobacco advertising bans on the media industry and alternative sources of business; (ii) benefits to the health of Lebanese and the health system of reduced tobacco use; (iii) potential impact of pending tobacco control laws and increased taxation on the general economy, government revenues and farmers' livelihoods.
- √ Distribution list for the policy briefs and related single page digest version.
- √ List of locations where smoke air monitoring measurements are to be taken, as well as file listing dates, location, and result of measurement.
- √ Text of summary of tobacco industry document regarding activities in Lebanon as well as distribution list for the summary.
- √ Letter of invitation, agenda, list of participants, and participant evaluation of seminars for individuals from specific sectors of the community who have not previously been informed about tobacco and its control
- √ Surveys will document increased knowledge and changed attitudes of legislators, policy makers, and key organizational representatives regarding the value and necessity of evidence-based tobacco control measures, particularly in the areas of expanded health warnings, restraints on advertising and bans on smoking in enclosed public spaces. Three surveys will take place at months 3, 12, 21 of the project.

Related to objective 3, the following indicators will be measured:

- √ List of public information venues, type (TV, newspaper, public lecture), date, topic, speaker, and attendance. At least one public information effort should be conducted each month starting within three months of project initiation.
- √ Documentation of date and text of tobacco industry arguments in the press and date and text of counter response by project team. Date of response should be within a week.
- √ List of general public mass media documents about need for tobacco control published by team members (with text and date).
- √ Public surveys will document increased awareness of need for tobacco control laws with specific emphasis on expanded warning, increased limits of advertising, and bans on smoking in public places. Four surveys will be conducted during the project period: one within two months of the initiation of the project (as a documentation of baseline knowledge and attitudes), and the others every six months thereafter.

Related to objective 4, the following indicators will be measured:

- √ Letter from Minister of Interior and consumer's right office in the Ministry of Economics will begin inspections and provide local authorities with information on violations; as necessary, inform local media and the court system.
- √ List of site of inspection, date, and result of smoke air monitoring at site.
- √ List of complaints files including date of court consideration, and outcome
- √ List and text of press releases/briefing related to violations

Related to objective 5, the following indicators will be measured

- ✓ Press releases, briefing papers, newspaper columns, and TV interviews counteracting Tobacco industry arguments against tobacco control.
- ✓ Counter advertising booths during youth concerts that state the real facts, talks about health effects, etc...
- ✓ Database that records and documents tobacco industry practices and use for advocacy.

Related to objective 6, the following indicators will be measured

- ✓ Letter of invitation, agenda, list of participants, and participant evaluation of workshops with NGOs working in tobacco control and with professional organizations
- ✓ Database of members, allies and potential members

A.2.5 Obstacles

Identify obstacles that might prevent you from achieving your objectives and explain how you intend to tackle them.

In fact, the objectives are precisely those meant to overcome the recurrent and chronic obstacles to tobacco control in Lebanon: a narrow base of support within society, interference with the legislative process by the tobacco industry and its advertising allies. Turn the clock back several decades in the USA where very similar conditions existed; tobacco control through legislation only began to succeed through civil society action; the rising mountain of evidence of tobacco's harm to the smoker and non-smoker alike; enlistment of cancer and lung associations in the fight; lawyers willing to take on the industry in court; demonstrations that advertising and hospitality industries were unharmed economically and (more recently) exposure of tobacco companies' behavior through their previously secret documents.

In response to the process of the FCTC ratification, MOPH and PHC has ended drafting tobacco control legislations by early 2005, unfortunately; and after the assassination of previous prime minister Rafic Hariri in February 2005, the country entered in so called "Political Paralysis". Since then Lebanese Parliament committees never met to discuss any new legislation.

As a new national unit government has been formed which ended a 27-month political crisis in the country, the political situation has been restored to normal, furthermore; the current Minister of Public Health Mohammad Jawad Khalifeh is a medical doctor and has served as head of the general surgery department at the American University of Beirut Medical Center and secretary of the Lebanese Association for Organ Donors and very committed for a strong tobacco control policies, moreover; the engagement of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities in this grant can provide for its sustained

enforcement of tobacco control legislations and considering the current Minister of Interior Ziad Baroud, a lawyer and human rights activist, also works as a consultant with the United Nations Development Program, and Co-founder of the Lebanese NGO "Tobacco Free Initiative" both, provides an opportunity to overcome these obstacles and to push for the draft legislation to be strengthened, passed, and most importantly, enforced. We expect the two-year campaign proposed here is a start on the same climb: broadening the base of knowledge and support throughout Lebanese society; demonstration of tobacco smoke's poisoning of indoor air; sustained anti-tobacco propaganda through the media; and analyses to demonstrate to influential politicians that the advertising industry, hospitality venues and the national economy will not be harmed.

A.2.6 Sustainability

MOPH will continue to seek and secure funding from governmental and other sources for these and other tobacco control activities. It is hoped that achieving successes in some of the objectives will encourage the Government and its external donors to maintain a tobacco control office. (See attached commitment letter from the Ministry of Public Health)

NCDP will continue with the tobacco control activities consistent with the national tobacco control strategy and the Ministry of Interior and consumer's right office in the Ministry of Economics will continue its role as a consumer watchdog securing its own resources.