Feb 21, 2017 - Meeting on the communication strategy.

The goal of the meeting was to develop a plan to counter the tobacco industry rhetoric around tobacco taxes. The target audience is the M of Finance, M of Industry, M of Planning, opinion leaders, the general public. The group agreed upon these key messages:

- Tax is good for the economy/long-term economic performance.
- Tax helps the poor – tobacco use is regressive, tobacco tax increase is progressive.
- Tax is a good revenue source that can be mobilized quickly.
- Illicit trade doesn't undermine the public health impact of tobacco tax; its risk for revenue goals is minimal and can be managed.

The group agreed to create a depository of evidence supporting these messages and collect intelligence about communication channels capable for delivering these messages to the target audience. Possible messengers: development agencies not working in tobacco control, the Economist, op-eds in leading newspapers, social media.

Feb 22 - 23, 2017 – Bloomberg Initiative partners planning meeting

An overview of the Initiative's 10-years progress – it saved 30 mil premature deaths. An overview of the CDC data collection efforts – GYTS, GATS. Keynote on global governance and tobacco control - Richard Haass, the Council on Foreign Relations. Main focus of the Initiative in the next 2 years will be on tobacco tax and on industry accountability. On the country level, the initiative will focus India and China since the largest public health gains can be made there. A new partner – U of Illinois at Chicago, will be working with think tanks to influence tobacco tax policy. The priority countries for the first year: Indonesia, Vietnam and Latin America (regional hub). The partners will be coordinating their tax-related activities. Overview of the grant program – about third of the funding is devoted to grants. There are regular funding cycles, but ad hoc funding is available to address emerging opportunities. The Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluations presented on how to measure tobacco-related burden. New 2015 estimates will be published in the Lancet in April 2017. The Institute plans to generate estimates of policy impact on country-specific prevalence. The implication of e-cigs for public health – CDC is against endorsing e-cigs as a harm reduction strategy. Brainstorming on how to work toward sustainable tobacco control: earmarking is ideal, but increasing fiscal space for public health is another approach (soft earmarking). Many countries are struggling with balanced budget and tobacco taxes can help with this.
Feb 24, 2017 – Bloomberg Initiative partners tax meeting

Structured discussion about tax situation in 6 Bloomberg priority countries: Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Indonesia and China.
The topics covered for each country:
Tax policy authority
Budget timeline
Tax status
Tax goals
Jo wants to come to Cape Town to discuss how the KH will fit into the tax plans for the Bloomberg priority countries.