



This document relates to item 5.8 of the provisional agenda

Seventh Session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control,
7-12 November 2016, New Delhi

Addressing gender-specific risks when developing tobacco control strategies

Key recommendations

The Parties should, at COP7, ensure that:

- Sustainable implementation measures in relation to tobacco use and tobacco control in the lives of women and girls are developed;
- The reporting instrument includes gender indicators;
- Gender issues are included in the terms of reference of the Internal Review Mechanism;
- A toolkit is developed by a group of experts, in conjunction with the Convention Secretariat, to support tobacco control advocates in promoting FCTC interventions to policymakers, UN agencies and other development partners who work on maternal and child health and gender equality.

Why this is important

Provisions of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) have the potential to protect women and men alike, but this potential will only be realised when gender-specific considerations are included in the development and implementation of tobacco control policies and programmes. Although rates of male smoking in most countries have peaked and are now in slow decline, the rates for girls and women are still rapidly rising. Researchers predict that while 12 percent of the female population currently smokes, this number will rise to 20 percent by 2025. This does not take into account other forms of tobacco, which are also increasingly used by women.

COP7 report on gender

At the request of several Parties, and in consultation with the Bureau, United Nations bodies and civil society organisations that focus on gender issues, the Convention Secretariat prepared report FCTC/COP/7/14. The report emphasises that gender characteristics play a significant role in initiating and maintaining tobacco use (para 15), and highlights potential areas of the FCTC where gender-specific tobacco control measures should be applied (para 19). In particular, the report calls attention to these facts:

- A gender-focused approach to the global tobacco epidemic has been widely neglected;
- The tobacco industry has taken great advantage of this situation;
- There is, as yet, no systematic collection of best practices;
- Serious qualitative and quantitative research gaps persist, especially in low- and middle-income countries; and
- Parties lack guidance and practical approaches to enable them to implement gender-specific policies.



At COP7, Parties will have an opportunity to address gender-specific risks when developing tobacco control strategies.

FCTC implementation and gender-specific considerations

One example of the need for gender-specificity in tobacco control policies and programmes relates to Article 11 of the WHO FCTC. The tobacco industry uses packaging and product design as part of its marketing to increase the attractiveness of tobacco use among girls and women. Accordingly, tobacco control measures with regards to packaging and labelling should be carefully designed in order to have a strong impact on women and to ensure that they are adequately warned of the dangers of tobacco use. In this regard, dedicated pre-market testing of health warnings to assess their effectiveness on women, as well as men, is essential.

In relation to Article 14, it is clear that the need for cessation services and support can vary greatly between men and women. Traditionally, smoking cessation programmes for women have tended to focus only on tobacco use during pregnancy. While such approaches are important, there is also a need to develop broader cessation programmes for girls and women who are not pregnant. Cessation services and materials should be tailored to address women's particular reasons for tobacco use and concerns about stopping, such as weight gain and dealing with stress. Unless gender-specific indicators are incorporated into planning and provision of cessation services, and until Parties are required to report on them, gains for women and girls will be severely curtailed.

These are just two examples of the need to integrate gender specificity in tobacco control planning and policies. If we are to ensure that rates of tobacco use among girls and women do not increase in line with present trends, and in fact decrease, it will be necessary to address gender-specific issues across the spectrum of tobacco control policies contained in the WHO FCTC.

Gender-sensitive responses, international development and resource mobilisation

The FCTC is recognised in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a critical tool in sustainable development. It is one of only three international conventions explicitly referenced in the SDGs, appearing as 'means of implementation' target 3a. The inclusion of the FCTC in the global development agenda provides strong opportunities to engage additional stakeholders to support national level tobacco control efforts and to mobilise additional resources for this purpose.

A number of global development initiatives focus particularly on improving the health of women and children. For example, organisations like UN Women and Every Woman, Every Child work to unlock progress on health issues that threaten gender equality. Organisations like these, along with policymakers, UN agencies and other development partners who work in this space should be engaged in efforts to implement the FCTC. For example, these stakeholders could participate in campaigns and other work on promoting smoke-free spaces. Gender roles not only affect exposure to second-hand smoke, but also the power to claim the right to health¹. Women and children often lack power to negotiate smoke-free spaces, and as such, ensuring women's access to smoke-free spaces is not only a matter of tobacco control policy, but also of gender equality. Emphasising this and similar arguments may contribute to mobilising additional stakeholders to support FCTC implementation.

¹ Gender and Tobacco Control: A policy brief. WHO, 2007. Available at:
http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/general/policy_brief.pdf

National tobacco control focal points may also benefit from a practical toolkit or overview of strategies outlining how to promote FCTC implementation to development stakeholders who work on women's health, as well as on the best approaches to engage these actors in tobacco control efforts.

Action at COP7

Article 4.2(d) calls for the need to take measures to address gender-specific risks when developing tobacco control strategies. The Parties should, at COP7, ensure that:

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- The reporting instrument includes gender indicators;
- Gender issues are included in the terms of reference of the Internal Review Mechanism;
- A toolkit is developed by a group of experts, in conjunction with the Convention Secretariat, to support tobacco control advocates in promoting FCTC interventions to policymakers, UN agencies and other development partners who work on maternal and child health and gender equality.