



This document relates to all items of the provisional agenda

Sixth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control,
13-18 October 2014, Moscow

FCA Policy briefing
Women cannot be left behind

Key recommendations

- In fulfilment of FCTC Article 4.2(d), which until now has not been a focus at any meetings of the Conference of the Parties, COP6 should request the Convention Secretariat, together with WHO TFI and in consultation with civil society group – particularly those that work in gender and tobacco control – to develop an expert report on gender and tobacco control.
- The report should include measures to address gender-specific issues when developing tobacco control policies and strategies as well as the development and utilisation of women's leadership in tobacco control. The report should be considered at COP7 with the aim of strengthening gender specific implementation of the FCTC at global and country level.

Introduction

The FCTC encourages the development of policies with regard to national identity, cultural diversity and gender. National identity and cultural diversity considerations have been repeatedly recognised as critical to FCTC implementation. So far, a gender-focussed approach to the global tobacco epidemic has been widely neglected, and the tobacco industry has taken great advantage of this situation.

Women in developing countries have now become an even easier target of the tobacco industry's tactics to expand its market base. More than 1.5 million women die each year from the consequences of tobacco use. Without a clearly articulated gender focus in tobacco control policies, the yearly death toll among women will jump to 2.5 million by 2030. Of these avoidable deaths, 75 percent will occur in developing countries¹.

FCTC provisions 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.

Gender-sensitive policies: big gap to be addressed

The tobacco industry has developed sophisticated gender-based strategies to entice more girls and women into a lifelong tobacco addiction. There is an urgent need for policy makers to incorporate gender indicators and gender-specific reporting requirements in their policies and programmes to counteract the industry's efforts.

¹ Gender Women, and The Tobacco Epidemic, WHO 2010
http://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/gender/women_tob_epidemic/en/index.html

According to the WHO Global Tobacco Control Report (GTCR), while rates of smoking among boys are levelling off in many countries, rates of smoking among girls are increasing. This will have a significant impact on the tobacco epidemic and could reverse some of the recent gains in tobacco control in many countries.

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 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, and in fact decrease, it will be necessary to analyse the WHO FCTC in order to highlight areas where special consideration should be played to gender differences. This process could be achieved through the preparation of an expert report. Such an analytical report will greatly assist Parties in implementing the principles contained in Article 4.2(d) of the treaty.

Action by the Parties at COP6

With world leaders calling for accelerated implementation of the FCTC, it is essential that the specific needs and life circumstances of women and girls are taken into account. But at this point, policy makers lack guidance on how to effectively integrate gender-sensitive measures in national tobacco control policies and programmes.

At its sixth session, the COP should request an expert report on measures to address gender-specific issues when developing tobacco control strategies, to be developed for COP7. The expert report may also provide specific suggestions on how to build up and capitalise on women's leadership in tobacco control. Women cannot be left behind when it comes to addressing the number one cause of preventable death – tobacco use.

FCTC Article 4.2 (d): *Strong political commitment is necessary to develop and support, at the national, regional and international levels, comprehensive multisectoral measures and coordinated responses, taking into consideration ... the need to take measures to address gender-specific risks when developing tobacco control strategies.*