



This document relates to item 4.7 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:
Impact Assessment of the FCTC

Key recommendations

- Before deciding to undertake a global impact assessment of the FCTC, the COP will need to address several issues, particularly the purpose of the exercise and the primary use of its results.
- Once these issues have been resolved, further scoping of the exercise and refinement of the methodology should take place. The Convention Secretariat should be requested to undertake this work.
- Parties that may decide to undertake an FCTC impact assessment individually should be encouraged to share their respective approaches with the Convention Secretariat in advance, and collaborate with each other to develop a common methodology if at all possible.

Introduction

During discussions on the FCTC reporting instrument at COP5, Norway proposed conducting an impact assessment of the Convention to mark the tenth anniversary of its entering into force, which will be 27 February 2015. The proposal was briefly discussed on the fourth day of COP5¹ and decision FCTC/COP5(12) was adopted. The decision requests the Convention Secretariat to “prepare a report outlining a limited number of options with attached cost implications for conducting an impact assessment of the WHO FCTC after its 10 years of operation”. This report will be considered at COP6 (report FCTC/COP/6/15).

Impact assessment in a nutshell

Impact assessments are commonly used when new policies or programmes are developed or implemented to examine their economic, social, health and other impacts. Health impact assessments² have been promoted and used by WHO, the World Bank and many other international, national and even municipal entities, to identify how a policy/programme influences health.

¹ See COP5 Summary records of Committees (p.90 and 137-138) at:
http://apps.who.int/gb/fctc/PDF/cop5/FCTC_COP5_REC2.pdf

² See WHO’s dedicated website with various definitions of health impact assessment at:
<http://www.who.int/hia/about/defin/en/>.

Impact assessments aim to determine both the anticipated and the unintended consequences of a policy/programme. They can be carried out before, during or after implementation. In the case of the FCTC, which is already in place, only a concurrent impact assessment could be performed. A concurrent impact assessment is usually performed to review changes resulting from a given policy/programme and to introduce improvements³. A concurrent impact assessment may also detect unintended consequences of the policy/programme and help to mitigate them.

As noted in report FCTC/COP/6/15, to date no international Convention has been subject to an impact assessment.

Current proposals for conducting an impact assessment of the FCTC

The potential scope of an impact assessment of the Convention after 10 years is vast, and the complexity of the exercise is daunting. Report FCTC/COP/6/15 explores the potential for assessing the impact of the Convention in four “distinct though interrelated areas of coverage”:

- On the implementation of tobacco control measures;
- On the impact of tobacco use and related health consequences;
- More broadly, to assess the social, economic and environmental impact of the Convention, and
- On public health.

The report presents a brief rationale for each of these assessments. It also presents some of the many challenges that those conducting an assessment would face – not least of which is the availability of relevant data of sufficient quality. In particular, the Secretariat report emphasises that adequate data is likely not available for an assessment of the social, economic and environmental impact of the Convention (para 16).

Critical issues to be more fully explored

Before deciding to undertake the exercise, the COP will need to address several issues. FCA wishes to bring Parties’ attention to the following issues:

- Purpose of the exercise and the primary use of its results;
- Appropriate methodology and availability of data;
- Stakeholders involved in the exercise; and
- Necessary resources to conduct such an impact assessment.

³ World Bank. (2009). Introduction to Health Impact Assessment. Material available at: <http://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/a0f1120048855a5a85dcd76a6515bb18/HealthImpact.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>

Clarity about the main purpose of an impact assessment

So far, Parties have not had the opportunity to air their views on the main purpose of the exercise. While doing so, it will be particularly important to consider its linkages to other monitoring and reporting initiatives underway, including the current FCTC reporting system, WHO Reports on Global Tobacco Epidemic (GTCR)⁴ and Global Burden of Disease publications⁵, Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS)⁶, the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITC)⁷ and so on, and how the impact assessment would build on these. Ideally, it would demonstrate how the contributions of these other initiatives can be combined to provide a more powerful overview of the impact of the FCTC.

We believe it is critical to narrow the focus of the exercise to improve the implementation of the Convention, and to carefully align this exercise with other current efforts to strengthen the FCTC, such as the working group on sustainable measures and any inter-sessional work related to a review of Parties' reports.

How will the results of the analysis be used?

A thorough discussion on the intended use of the results of an FCTC impact assessment has not occurred yet and will need to take place at COP6. Should the results primarily inform future COP discussions, or should they be used to raise the profile of the FCTC at other international fora? We believe careful consideration is needed of the objectives of the assessment, and that its focus should lead to strengthened implementation of the Convention. Its results should be used particularly to inform the COP about potential gaps in implementation and provide guidance to step up implementation of the FCTC and its impact. Such an impact assessment would be the first ever of a UN Treaty, and could potentially provide valuable insight on Treaty implementation generally.

Confidence in the availability of data, particularly baseline data, and the methodology

The report FCTC/COP/6/15 provides helpful insights into how the impact assessment could be undertaken. However, much more work is needed to address concerns regarding data and methodology. Global data on tobacco use in 2005 are not available. Parties started submitting their FCTC implementation reports in 2007, two years after the FCTC came into force⁸. Similarly, the GTCR was published for the first time in 2008.

Further difficulties may be encountered in mapping the status of tobacco control legislation prior to 2005. It may be that impact of the FCTC could only be assessed within certain countries, particularly countries with good data.

Who is best placed to do the assessment?

Report FCTC/COP/6/15 notes that the work could be carried out by the Secretariat and external consultants it commissions, or it could be entirely outsourced. Typically, impact assessments are conducted by independent experts. While this is important, we consider it vital that the Secretariat plays a central role in coordinating any assessment that takes place. We would not prioritise an assessment done only for academic reasons, but we would want to see an assessment that was authoritative and independent.

⁴ For more information, see: http://www.who.int/tobacco/global_report/2013/en/

⁵ For more information, see: http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/publications/en/

⁶ For more information, see: <http://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/gats/en/>

⁷ For more information, see: <http://www.itcproject.org/>

⁸ According to the official overview, 61 Parties submitted their implementation reports in 2007.

The resources available for an impact assessment

The Secretariat report estimates that an assessment of the impact of the FCTC at a global level will take between two to four years and will cost up to US\$620,000 (para 35). We consider that the report likely underestimates the time, effort and resources that would be needed to undertake an endeavour of the scale proposed in the report.

Conducting the exercise should not come at the cost of work to support implementation of the Convention and other activities necessary for its operations. Unless the total amount of assessed contributions provided by Parties to the budget substantially increases, extra-budgetary resources will be necessary to undertake the impact assessment.

The way forward

Assessing progress in implementation of the FCTC is important. Currently, it is unclear whether a comprehensive assessment could be accomplished globally within a reasonable timeframe and resources. Much work remains to be done before the exercise can be launched. Once the purpose of the exercise and the primary use of its results are established by the COP, the Convention Secretariat should be requested to provide further details on the most appropriate methodology and availability of data, particularly the baseline data.

At the same time, Parties may decide to undertake such an exercise individually. The tenth anniversary of the Convention provides a unique opportunity in this regard, particularly for the countries which became Parties to the Convention in 2005. Interested Parties should be encouraged to share their respective approaches with the Secretariat.