

Expert group consultation on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers

WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, New Delhi
30–31 July 2015

SEA-Tobacco-55
Distribution: General

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*WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, New Delhi
30–31 July 2015*

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Printed in India

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Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	civil society organization
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DPSEEA	Driving force–Pressure–State–Exposure–Effects–Action (model)
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCTC	Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
FCV	flue-cured Virginia
GDP	gross domestic product
GTS	green tobacco sickness
IEC	information, education and communication
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITGA	International Tobacco Growers Association
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
PHFI	Public Health Foundation of India
SEATCA	Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance
SEWA	Self Employed Women’s Association
TTM	Thailand Tobacco Monopoly
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
VHAI	Voluntary Health Association of India
WHO	World Health Organization
WLF	World Lung Foundation

1. Background

Tobacco farming and handling cause serious health and environmental problems. Tobacco farmers and workers constantly face health-related issues of toxicity due to working with tobacco, of which green tobacco sickness is the best known. In addition, they face the adverse consequences of the use of harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides in large amounts.

Alternative livelihood is a supply reduction measure of the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). It is related to Article 17, “Provision of support for economically viable alternative activities” and Article 18, “Protection of the environment and the health of persons”. Supply reduction cannot be forced upon farmers; however, alternatives can be explored to improve the health of farmers, reduce tobacco use as a demand reduction measure, and support farmers wishing to switch to alternative crops.

Although several economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco growing have been identified through studies in various regions of the world, research and pilot projects in the area of alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers have been limited in the South-East Asia Region. An expert group consultation was held in WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia at New Delhi on 30–31 July 2015 to bring the best practices and scientific evidence in alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers on one platform. The meeting was attended by experts in various fields from Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines, Thailand and Uganda. (See Annex 1 for the list of participants, and Annex 2 for the agenda of the meeting.)

2. Inaugural session

Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi, Director, Department of Noncommunicable diseases and Environmental Health, WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia

Dr Thamarangsi welcomed the participants and thanked them for sparing the time to come and deliberate on a very important issue. The Region is home to 150 million smokers and an equal number of users of other forms of tobacco. About 4.2 million people are employed full time in the tobacco industry, as well as migrant workers. However, tobacco workers face serious health issues such as green tobacco sickness, and poisoning from toxic chemicals and pesticides. In addition, there are other issues such as environmental degradation, deforestation, and abuse of human rights in the form of child labour and unfair contractual agreements. He explained how the tobacco industry was a distorted business, in which the middle man (i.e. industry) gained, but the growers and users both lost. He also warned about the unscrupulous means used by industry to keep growing tobacco. It uses farmers as a front to lobby with governments against tobacco control laws. What is needed is scientific evidence on the harms caused by tobacco to farmers, as most of them are unaware of the effects it has on health.

Articles 17 and 18 of the WHO FCTC are related to alternative livelihoods. Dr Thamarangsi said that many countries were taking steps to find economically viable alternatives to tobacco growing. Brazil, Kenya and Uganda have completed some successful projects. However, only a few pilot projects have taken place in Member States of the South-East Asia Region.

Dr Thamarangsi urged participants to work towards rolling out policies on sustainable alternative livelihoods and said that he looked forward to the receiving recommendations from this meeting. He wished participants a pleasant stay in New Delhi.

Objectives of the Consultation

Dr Nyo Nyo Kyaing, Regional Adviser (TFI), WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia

Dr Kyaing presented the objectives of the Consultation.

General objective

To get expert advice on rolling out the agenda on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers in the South-East Asia Region.

Specific objectives

- (1) To share information on country experiences on alternative livelihoods of tobacco farmers and workers from South-East Asia and other regions
- (2) To identify the research agenda in areas of alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers in Member States, especially in the area of health and economic consequences of tobacco farming and handling of tobacco leaves
- (3) To draft regional recommendations on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers in the South-East Asia Region.

Dr Dharendra Sinha, Regional Adviser (Surveillance – Tobacco Control), WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia asked participants to introduce themselves.

Articles 17 and 18 of the WHO FCTC

Dr Maria Carmen Audera-Lopez, Technical Officer, WHO FCTC Convention Secretariat, Geneva, Switzerland

Dr Audera-Lopez discussed Articles 17 and 18. Article 17 states “Provision of support for economically viable alternative activities” and Article 18, “Protection of the environment and the health of persons”. Article 17 is directed at reducing social disruption and poverty linked to tobacco farming, which arose due to unfair contractual agreements between farmers and the tobacco industry, use of child labour, and loss of income if industry

moved to more profitable countries. Article 18 aims to protect both the environment (due to deforestation, contamination of water supplies due to pesticides, soil degradation) and health (green tobacco sickness, exposure to pesticides, respiratory effects due to tobacco dust and injuries). About 100 million workers are affected at the various stages of tobacco production.

Tobacco growing has shifted from high-income (10%) to low- and middle-income countries (90%). The reasons for this are the sense of “security” from contracts, dependence of communities and families on tobacco growing, belief that gross income is higher, uncertainty about other crops, and the drought-resistant nature of the tobacco plant.

Implementation of Articles 17 and 18 is low across countries (13% and 40%, respectively). At the various Conferences of the Parties (COPs) starting in 2006, various steps were taken to implement these two Articles. At COP 6 in October 2014, policy options and recommendations were adopted. These provide Parties with a framework within which to identify and develop effective strategies for alternative crops and livelihoods, and for protecting tobacco growers and the environment.

Dr Audera-Lopez discussed the guiding principles for developing effective strategies for alternative crops and livelihoods. These included diversification of livelihoods (rather than substitution), involvement of tobacco growers and workers in policy development, basing policies and programmes on best practices and linking them to sustainable development programmes, promoting these alternatives within a holistic framework, protecting these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry, and building partnerships and collaboration. Diversification strategies should include both agricultural and non-agricultural opportunities, and promote sustainable development. The transition period from tobacco growing to an alternative livelihood should include intersectoral initiatives that provide farmers with a broader array of resources and opportunities.

Research should be promoted on developing effective strategies. In addition, education and training programmes should be provided for farmers and growers, and obstacles such as financial constraints removed. Other measures include keeping coherence between various sectors, identifying strategies of the tobacco sector, mainstreaming alternative

livelihoods into rural development programmes, and ensuring social, health and environmental protection in tobacco-growing regions.

Progress in implementation of Articles 17 and 18 should be monitored and evaluated through the use of indicators; these include baseline assessments, process and expected outcome indicators. Information exchange and international cooperation, with coordination by the Convention Secretariat, is another recommendation of COP 6.

Dr Audera-Lopez then presented the current status of implementation of Articles 17 and 18 worldwide, based on the Global progress report published in 2014. The focus of future work should be promotion and sharing of good practices, policy options on economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco growing, and international and interagency cooperation.

Production and trade of tobacco: a regional perspective

Dr Vinayak Mohan Prasad, Project Manager, Tobacco Control, WHO headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

In order to identify trends in tobacco consumption and trade, Dr Prasad started with a question: how have countries fared in the past 15 years? He quoted a report by WHO and the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD). According to the report, although Bangladesh has instituted several measures to reduce the production of and trade in tobacco, these have not had an impact. Both have increased. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, production has gone up but trade is decreasing. In India, one of the top growers of tobacco, total production has increased, while trade has increased tremendously (both leaf import and export). Indonesia too has seen an increase in both production and trade. In the Maldives, trade has decreased substantially. Myanmar and Nepal both show an increase in trade but decrease in production. In Sri Lanka, production has decreased while trade is mostly stable, while in Thailand, both production and trade have remained stable. No information is available from Timor-Leste.

Of the top 10 tobacco growers, in Malawi, Zimbabwe and some other countries, tobacco accounts for a very high percentage of the gross

domestic product (GDP), but not in countries such as Brazil and India. This can help to counter the myths spread by the tobacco industry about the loss to farmers.

Policy-makers and public health experts need to have a better understanding of the impact of trade liberalization on domestic agricultural production and trade of tobacco. To this end, UNCTAD and WHO are developing country fact sheets. Understanding how tobacco production and trade has evolved and estimating the future demand is critical for policy-making and for estimating how much support farmers need.

Health, economic, environmental and social impacts of tobacco farming

Dr Nyo Nyo Kyaing

The global tobacco production chain comprises three elements—the agricultural sector, primary processing of tobacco leaves and the tobacco products industry that manufactures the end products. Tobacco growers and contractual, non-contractual, permanent or seasonal workers employed by the farmers constitute the agricultural sector. The farmers themselves earn very little for their crop in comparison with the final price obtained at the end of the value-added chain.

The health impact of tobacco includes green tobacco sickness (nicotine poisoning), pesticide poisoning due to the use of large quantities of pesticides, respiratory effects from exposure to tobacco dust, injuries and contact dermatitis.

The environmental impact is widespread. Biodiversity losses include degradation of forests, deforestation from wood needed for curing the leaves, as well as for cultivation. Tobacco, like other mono-crops, depletes soil nutrients at a much faster rate than other crops. Other effects are contamination of water supplies from pesticide use, and soil degradation due to intensive use of fertilizers. Tobacco is one of the top ten crops with the highest rates of fertilizer use.

The socioeconomic impacts are many. Unfair contractual arrangements between farmers and the tobacco industry are the norm.

Farmers are unable to get a good price for their product, cannot sell it in the open market, and are trapped in a vicious cycle of debt. The labour-intensive nature of tobacco growing and the usually small land holdings mean that children form a part of the workforce, against child rights established in international laws. Women too are involved in all stages of cultivation and processing, which affects the health of families.

Options for alternative livelihoods are concerns articulated by the WHO FCTC since the beginning. These alternatives should be explored to safeguard the health of farmers, mitigate the socioeconomic risks and prepare for future demand reduction. The Region is home to four of the top 20 tobacco growers in the world. Each of these countries should roll out their own agenda according to their needs.

A video on alternative livelihoods followed the presentation.

3. Experts' presentations

Moderator: Dr Vinayak Prasad

Bangladesh: Shifting out of tobacco to food production

Ms Farida Akhter, Executive Director, Unnayan Bikalper Nitinirdharoni Gobeshona (UBINIG), Dhaka, Bangladesh

Ms Akhter described Bangladesh's experience in shifting tobacco farmers to food production. Tobacco farmers were initially food farmers, who were lured by the tobacco industry. Tobacco is grown by tobacco companies through "contract growers". Tobacco companies move from place to place, offer economic "privileges" for farmers who receive a "card" from the company for contract farming for 1 year. They receive credit, inputs (fertilizers, pesticides) and the company buys the leaves. A specific variety of the leaf has to be grown, but companies are known to go back on their stipulated leaf price and offer lower prices. The inputs provided are treated as credit, which have to be paid back afterwards. The company may take legal action if the quota negotiated is not fulfilled.

Tobacco cultivation covers over 108 000 hectares of land, mostly in three districts – Rangpur, Kushtia and Bandarban. Traditional rabi (winter)

crops are being replaced by tobacco. Agricultural land is decreasing at the rate of 1.0 % each year. The tobacco grown is mostly exported. The total tobacco export was US\$ 7 million (2005–2006), which increased to US\$ 50 million (2009–2010). The export duty on tobacco has also been reduced from 10% to 5% since 2011–2012.

Bangladesh has policies to encourage the production of alternative crops. Article 12 of the Tobacco Control Bill, 2005 relates to the commitment to encourage the production of alternative crops in place of tobacco. The new Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) (Amendment) Act, 2013, which will be formulated soon, recommends a guideline for agricultural land being used for tobacco production.

Although it is well known that tobacco does not benefit farmers and instead damages their health and the environment, many of them are not willing to switch to alternative crops. A discussion with 2000 farmers to identify constraints to switching showed that the incentives provided by tobacco companies in the form of inputs and marketing of leaves are very tempting. Lack of support from the agricultural department to grow food crops was a major deterrent. Alternative crops would improve several aspects of farmers' livelihoods, such as ensuring food security and a market for food crops, as well as beneficial effects on their health. It would also improve soil conditions, provide food stocks, and be less expensive to produce, among others.

It is not possible to switch farmers immediately to growing food crops. Year-round planning is needed, as the time for growing tobacco (October–March) is also the time for growing major cereals, pulses and other food crops. Initially, other crops can be grown in the interim period, followed by substitution and transition crops such as rice, jute and vegetables. This could give farmers a continuous income.

In order to make the switch from growing tobacco to growing alternative crops, input supply and marketing of products should be ensured. Avoiding monoculture and diversification of crops would be of help. Companies should not be allowed to give inputs/cash to coerce farmers into tobacco farming. The health and environmental impact of tobacco cultivation should be highlighted. Multisectoral policies would be needed to shift to alternative livelihoods.

Operationalizing evidence into action for providing viable crop diversification options to tobacco farmers in India: a compelling case for change

Dr Jagdish Kaur, Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India

India is the third-largest producer of tobacco in the world, of which it grows many varieties. India has several tobacco control initiatives. These include the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003, WHO FCTC in 2004, MPOWER strategies, and the National Tobacco Control Programme, 2007–08. However, these are largely demand-side measures. Both supply-side and demand-side interventions are important to achieve effective tobacco control in India.

Dr Kaur highlighted the fact that being a signatory to the WHO FCTC, India's obligation towards the international community should galvanize the agricultural fraternity in India to seriously ponder on economically viable crop diversification options for tobacco growers and farmers. However, initiatives on provisioning viable alternative crop options in India have been generally limited to experiments carried out in research settings. Evidence-based, structured initiatives are needed to generate a substantial shift by tobacco farmers to alternative crops. Research on alternative crops should be conducted in situ with farmers in order to operationalize the existing evidence base. A viable alternative could be a remunerative cropping system rather than a mono-crop.

Alternative crop systems have been identified in various areas. Studies in various states have shown that to achieve a switch to alternative crops, basic infrastructural facilities need to be created, such as sustained supply of water for irrigation, markets, fertilizer availability, proper roads and transportation. Agricultural universities in the country should be engaged to provide technical support for the effective transfer of technologies related to alternative crops to the farming community, with support from the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, a mechanism should be set up for promoting alternative crops to the Tobacco Board to help the government and agriculture-pricing committees in working out minimum support prices, facilitating soft loans, setting up auction platforms for these crops, marketing

of alternate crops, etc. Farmers who are willing to switch should be provided technical assistance. Sustained awareness programmes should be conducted for farmers on the health impacts of tobacco cultivation and tobacco consumption.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has asked other stakeholder ministries to consider initiating new schemes/programmes or modify existing ones in order to provide alternate crop options/other economically viable options to tobacco growers, particularly those who are willing to shift from tobacco cultivation. Care should be taken to see that there is no economic loss to the farmer. The MoHFW has taken several other measures to enable the switch, such as constituting an “Inter-ministerial Committee of Secretaries” to review and develop a comprehensive policy on tobacco and various tobacco-related issues. The MoHFW has also asked the agriculture ministry to reconsider the “Barn Buyout Scheme”, which provides a support of INR 500 000 per barn to farmers who are willing to shift from tobacco cultivation. A high-level meeting in June 2015 opined that possible options of alternate cropping systems need to be explored first in a selected few districts.

Current and ex-tobacco farmers’ opinion on tobacco farming in Indonesia: preliminary findings

Mr Fauzi Ahmad Noor, Muhammadiyah Tobacco Control Center (MTCC), Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Indonesia is the fifth-largest producer of tobacco in the world, accounting for 1.9% of total production. Tobacco is produced largely in three provinces: East Java, Central Java and West Nusa Tenggara. Farmers in these three provinces have been shifting from tobacco agriculture to non-tobacco agriculture. Research was conducted to investigate the conditions of those who had made the shift and factors that influenced them to do so. This cross-sectional study was carried out in the three tobacco-growing provinces from June to July 2015, and enrolled 450 farmers (268 current tobacco farmers and 182 ex-tobacco farmers).

Some of the factors that influenced current tobacco farmers to keep growing tobacco were family traditions, tobacco industry pressure, profitability, and a belief that only tobacco could be grown on their land.

Of these, 85% said that they also grew other crops such as vegetables and grains. The results suggested that tobacco farmers were looking for alternative means of livelihood. Among the ex-tobacco farmers, nearly 98% said they were very happy that they had shifted to other crops. Rice, vegetables and fruit were among the crops they were growing now. The most important factor that caused them to switch was the tobacco industry's monopoly in controlling market prices. A comparison of the monthly income between tobacco growers and ex-growers showed that tobacco farming is not profitable.

Alternative livelihoods for tobacco farming in Thailand

Ms Bungon Ritthiphakdee, Executive Director, Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA), Bangkok, Thailand

Tobacco production in Thailand is concentrated in the north and northeast of Thailand over an area of 23 000 hectares. Burley, Virginia and Turkish tobacco are grown. Native tobacco is freely grown across the country. Tobacco is the second crop in the dry season after rice harvesting. Tobacco farmers are well off, and get a price guaranteed by the Thailand Tobacco Monopoly (TTM), a government company, which claims that it keeps a check on quality and use of chemicals. A quota system is used, under which a farmer has to produce a certain quota of tobacco. In recent years, despite tobacco being a lucrative crop, the area under production has declined, and the number of farmers has also declined. Some reasons include lack of interest in tobacco farming by the younger generation, the huge health costs and the labour-intensive nature of the crop.

Alternative crops to tobacco should generate substantial and sustainable income through market demand, be less labour intensive and not require large amounts of water. In addition, they should be pest resistant and supported by the government. A special type of chilli proved to be a viable alternative, as did artichokes, which have a demand for export. However, it takes a few years before the chemical residues left over from growing tobacco cease to have an effect. While some farmers have moved away from growing tobacco, many other still resist the move strongly. More information is needed on the mechanics of introducing alternative crops and reducing tobacco farming, as well as identifying non-agricultural alternatives for young people who do not wish to do farming at all.

The challenges to switching to alternative crops include tobacco farmers being used as a front to oppose the tobacco control law and the WHO FCTC, and the fact that tobacco consumption has not declined in Thailand. Some of the measures to be taken in future include setting up a local expert group on tobacco and alternative crops, conducting studies on alternative crops as well as the tobacco trade, setting up an interministerial task force on alternative livelihoods to tobacco farming, and a strategic plan for promoting and implementing the policy options and recommendations of WHO FCTC Articles 17 and 18.

Discussion

The preceding presentations generated a lively discussion. These covered a wide range of subjects. One participant wanted to know if tobacco farmers had to be registered, as for coffee. In Thailand, they were registered by the TTM. The presenter from Bangladesh was asked what would be the guarantee that farmers who had switched to alternative crops would not switch back again. Ms Akhter replied that an entire group of farmers had to be motivated and convinced, as their land holdings were adjacent to each other. Once they had switched, just one or two farmers would find it difficult to revert to growing tobacco. Also, to keep them from switching, cold storage and other facilities had to be supplied to them, as they would not be able to preserve the crops they grow without these. Another question related to Thailand and the controls exerted by the government. The quota system protects farmers in many ways, in most of the countries, as farmers see the money upfront.

Alternative livelihoods for tobacco farming: the Brazilian experience

*Dr Marcelo Moreno, Center for Studies on Tobacco and Health,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

Brazil is the largest exporter and second-largest producer of tobacco leaves in the world, with the family farming model being the basis of this economic activity. South Brazil grows 97% of the tobacco in Brazil.

The Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), Sérgio Arouca National School of Public Health (ENSP) and Center for Studies on Tobacco and Health (Cetab) conducted a qualitative study in the first half of 2013 on the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of female tobacco growers on the health and environmental impacts of tobacco farming. The DPSEEA model (Driving force–Pressure–State–Exposure–Effects–Action) was used to understand tobacco farming. The results showed that there was a need for an integrated and singularized approach to address the problems of tobacco growers, and propose policies to strengthen public actions aimed at promotion and health care of this specific population, and to local sustainable development.

The Brazilian Program for Diversification in Tobacco-Growing Areas, created in 2005, aims to support the implementation of rural extension projects, training and research to create new opportunities for income generation in the context of rural sustainable development. The guiding principles include sustainable development, food security, developing local knowledge and multifunctional farms, with a focus on social, environmental and economic sustainability, participation to empower tobacco growers and partnerships. These principles are enabled through a variety of existing public policies aimed at strengthening specific parts of the general national food and agriculture system. The Program has reached approximately 80 000 tobacco growers and 30 000 families in over 500 counties.

By protecting tobacco growers, farmers will not be used as front groups by the tobacco industry. One of the best strategies to reach tobacco growers, in order to help them understand and accept other economically viable alternatives, is to promote discussions on the health and environmental impacts due to tobacco farming.

Alternative sustainable livelihood strategy for tobacco farming in Kenya: case study of bamboo production

Professor Jacob K. Kibwage, The Cooperative University College of Kenya, Kenya

Professor Kibwage detailed the social and environmental impacts of tobacco farming. Six counties grow tobacco in Kenya. The number of

tobacco farmers has increased, from 1500 in 1971 to 35 000 in the 1990s to 55 000 in 2014. The number of tobacco companies has also increased from one to three. A major threat is the expansion of tobacco farming from medium- to high-potential agricultural areas due to the collapse of cotton, sisal, pyrethrum and coffee-farming sectors. The land under tobacco cultivation has also increased manifold at the expense of traditional food crops. Livestock activities are reducing due to limited land for grazing. As is known, tobacco has a major impact on soil erosion, deforestation and other environmental effects, including on water quality and availability. Cutting of indigenous trees is another undesirable effect with long-term consequences. Health consequences are also severe, and money is spent on treatment. In addition, livelihood indicators also show that tobacco farmers are worse off than other farmers.

Kenya's Vision 2030 aims to have a nation that has a clean, secure and sustainable environment by 2030. Although Kenya is a party to the WHO FCTC, no policies or guidelines exist for Articles 17 and 18. The Kenya Government Tobacco Control Act, 2007 also supports alternative livelihoods.

A study on bamboo as a sustainable alternative to tobacco farming was conducted from 2006 to 2013/14 to see if bamboo could serve as a sustainable alternative and a market value chain developed for bamboo products. Bamboo seedlings were planted under the same conditions as tobacco in terms of soil, altitude, rainfall and temperature. Inputs, information, training and capacity building were done extensively. Bamboo was chosen as it is the fastest-growing plant in the world, has high survival rates and is self-regenerating. In addition, it can be harvested for 40–120 years. Bamboo has 2000 uses, while tobacco has none. In the study areas, careful and regular monitoring was done. The experiments showed that bamboo production incomes/acre are 4–10 times higher than tobacco farming, and that bamboo grows well in tobacco-farming zones. It also has the potential for reforestation, protecting river banks and cleaning water. In the experimental areas, nearly all the farmers are willing to grow bamboo. About 80% of respondents have greatly reduced the acreage for tobacco farming. The livelihoods of tobacco farmers are being transformed through bamboo production and household utilization. Farmers are making various handicrafts such as baskets and furniture, among others. Four community-based bamboo farmers' cooperative societies have been formed, which market bamboo products.

Many factors contributed to the success of the project. Some of these were suitable location, political will, adequate preparation, a participatory approach, clear roles, appropriate technology transfer, and integration of gender aspects. Suitable solutions were found to the challenges. The other factors that contributed to the success of the programme are quality inputs, financing/credit to farmers, education and training, value chain development, price assurance, sustainable market, timely payments, low labour input and occupational health risks, and diversity of uses, including household uses.

Aspects of the tobacco value chain that hinder transitioning to viable alternatives in Uganda

Ms Florence Kabugo Byamukama, Technical Advisor, Agro-Economics, Centre for Tobacco Control in Africa, Kampala, Uganda

The tobacco value chain consists of all actors involved, directly or indirectly, in producing, processing, marketing and consuming tobacco. They actively seek to support each other so that they can increase their efficiency and competitiveness, as well as profits from tobacco-related activities.

About 75 000 farmers from 22 districts and about 600 000 people derive their livelihood from tobacco (2011), which is the oldest export crop. Tobacco farmers do not receive any technical or financial support from the government. There is also no policy to implement the government obligation under the WHO FCTC to promote alternative livelihoods.

Factors that limit transition to other crops include limited knowledge and information on the dangers of growing tobacco; lack of information on the profitability of alternatives, which would inform the transitioning decision and process; lack of support systems to start and manage alternative enterprises – financing, extension services, inputs; and a traditional mind-set. At the production/farm level, there is limited access to inputs and technologies for alternatives, whereas the tobacco industry provides all inputs. There is also limited access to extension services that support the alternatives, unlike the tobacco industry, and limited research done on the different aspects of production of alternative crops. At the value addition level, there is limited access to knowledge and skills for

processing of alternatives, and to processing facilities, unlike tobacco, where industry takes care of all these aspects. At the marketing level, knowledge about the market is limited, including for alternative crops, and there is instability in the market such as fluctuations in prices and demand, and absence of market guarantees on where, to whom and how much to sell at.

Trigger factors that could encourage transitioning include economic benefits such as better income, low labour requirement, more leisure time, and improved health. Other factors are information about and support systems for alternatives, food and nutrition security, and environmental protection. The transitioning process will take time; more than four years, and must be supported by government incentives. The land should be divided into two and both tobacco and the alternative crop should be grown for at least four years, and then the land used for tobacco farming should be used for another crop. However, market challenges may result in relapsing to tobacco growing.

Thus, value chain analysis provides the much-needed information that guides tobacco control promoters to focus their support on viable alternatives. Value chain development for viable alternatives is a catalyst for transitioning from tobacco farming into those identified viable alternatives. Transitioning farmers need support systems to provide them with inputs, extension services, information, financing and market linkages for sustainability and profitability of the alternatives. The private sector has an important role to play in providing farm support and market linkages for alternative crops/farm outputs.

Alternative livelihoods for tobacco farming in the Philippines

Dr E. Ulysses Dorotheo, FCTC Programme Director, Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance, Manila, the Philippines

In the Philippines, low prices for tobacco are dictated by the tobacco industry. Although it is the only crop that has a floor price, farmers get less due to an arbitrary leaf grading/pricing system. This system was approved by the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) in 2013 during one of the consultative conferences held every two years to review and adjust the floor

prices. It provides a semblance of fairness and equity, and makes industry look good when buying at higher than floor prices.

The tobacco industry claims that about 2.9 million Filipinos are directly dependent on the tobacco sector. Tobacco farming is done on approximately 32 200 hectares across 25 provinces, of which 67% are in the Ilocos region (Region I). However, tobacco is not the only produce. Non-tobacco crops such as garlic, onion, tomato, eggplant and bell pepper are also grown and give better returns, in part due to the high input costs of tobacco. In Region I of the Philippines, about 88% of tobacco farmers and 81% of non-tobacco farmers have a yearly income that is below the poverty line. Many are tenants on the land they cultivate. Both types of farmers gave similar reasons for cultivating their respective crops (profitability, availability of market, accessibility of farm inputs and labour, availability and familiarity with the technology, and suitability of the crop to the area and climate).

The reasons for shifting to alternative livelihoods include the social costs (cycle of debt, labour issues), health risks (green tobacco sickness [GTS], pesticide toxicity), environmental costs (soil depletion, soil/water pollution, deforestation) and political interference by tobacco companies using farmers as front groups against tobacco control measures.

The NTA runs many programmes. The Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities Programme provides assistance to tobacco farmers for producing rice, corn and high-value crops (vegetables), and hog and poultry-raising, including value-adding/processing. The Farmers' Organizational Development Programme strengthens farm clusters, does continuing registration of farmers, and provides organizational development and livelihood assistance to enable the farmers to become self-reliant, food-secured and active partners in development. In addition, NTA also conducts research on alternative uses of tobacco, such as the use of tobacco dust as a molluscicide, tobacco handmade paper, and so on.

Laws relating to tobacco include the Reform Act (RA) no.7171 and RA no. 8240. There are earmarked revenues for tobacco-growing provinces under these. The Sin Tax Reform Act 2012 (RA 10351) states that 15% of the incremental revenue collected from the excise tax on tobacco products under RA No. 8240 shall be exclusively utilized for programmes to promote economically viable alternatives for tobacco farmers and workers, such as inputs, training, financial support, among others.

Government efforts are needed for food security and sufficiency, through increased support for non-tobacco crops, including marketing. The government must also ensure proper use of RA 10351 (sin tax) revenues earmarked for alternative livelihoods, ensure the rights of farm labourers and their welfare, and protect the environment.

Discussion

Participants had several questions after these presentations. Most of these were related to the changeover from tobacco farming to alternative crops, and how countries worked towards supporting the change. An unanswered question was whether the switch was related to climate change. The presenter from Brazil was asked why their study focused only on women growers, to which the presenter replied that the reason was that the risk to women was higher. The presenter from Kenya was asked whether they had tried any other crops apart from bamboo, to which the reply was that they had tried soya beans. The presenter from the Philippines was asked why the alternative uses of tobacco were being studied, as it would mean that tobacco farming would continue. The presenter replied that it was a political problem for the Philippines, as the NTA was nurturing the tobacco industry and needed to be abolished.

Alternatives to tobacco-dependent livelihoods in India: ground realities and stakeholders' perceptions

Professor Nayantara Subrao Nayak, Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research, Dharwad, India

Professor Nayak presented the salient features of a study conducted in 12 states of India between 2012 and 2014 on options for diversification from tobacco farming. Tobacco-dependent livelihoods comprise the following: growers, *bidi* rollers, *tendu* leaf pluckers, processing workers, traders, agricultural labourers and factory workers. There are about 5.1–6.9 million people working in the tobacco industry, excluding retailers and factory workers. There are many problems in making the shift to alternative livelihoods. One of these is the two levels of decision-making in India. While the Centre looks after forests and labour welfare, agriculture is a State subject. Other problems include the multidimensional nature of the

tobacco industry, and multisectoral stakeholders involved – ministries of agriculture, labour, commerce, industry and forestry.

At present, the area under cultivation of tobacco has increased considerably, as has the total production (by 219%). Productivity of tobacco per unit (acre) of land in India increased by 108% from 1970–71 to 2010–11. The price of flue-cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco/kg rose from Rs 115.82 in 2013 to Rs 129.02 in 2014 and Rs 121.50 in 2015 compared to less than Rs 50/kg for other crops. Trials to involve new areas are proposed. Tobacco thus gives higher net returns and has an established market.

The study also identified the best alternative crops with higher returns per rupee of investment in several tobacco-growing states. These may change depending on the demand for other crops.

Bidi rolling and *tendu* plucking are lowly paid, much below the specified country norms. However, *bidi* rolling gives employment to a large number of unskilled people and accounts for 31% of family income in the households studied. It would be easier to shift these people to alternative livelihoods.

The study found that about 30% of tobacco farmers, 36% of *tendu* pluckers and 41% of *bidi* rollers were willing to shift to other employment. To promote alternative livelihoods, the study suggests that the Tobacco Board Act, 1975, whose function it is to “develop the tobacco industry”, be amended. It also proposes that action points be set for different ministries with respect to WHO FCTC commitments. In addition, a crop holiday could be taken by rotation and support provided to farmers for multiple crops for 3–5 years.

Economic burden of tobacco in India

Dr Rijo M. John, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur, India

Professor John said that in India, tobacco use causes about 5% of all deaths in women and 20% of all deaths in men aged 30–69 years, accounting for 1 million deaths per year in India (2010).

Professor John presented the findings of a study that assessed the tobacco-attributable annual economic burden of tobacco use in 13 major states of India. The study estimated both direct costs (medical cost of treating tobacco-related diseases) and indirect costs (indirect morbidity, indirect mortality costs of premature deaths attributable to tobacco use). Costs were calculated by gender, type of tobacco used (smoked or smokeless), state of residence, and age group (35–69 years). They were also broken down by four diseases (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, tuberculosis, and respiratory diseases), and by all diseases together using an all-cause attributable risk. The costs were not calculated for secondhand smoking, environmental implications of tobacco use (filter tips, packages, cartons, tobacco spit) and tobacco manufacturing, and shirking at the workplace.

The study found that the total economic costs attributable to tobacco use from all diseases in India in the year 2011 for persons aged 35–69 years amounted to Rs 104 500 crore (US\$ 22.4 billion), of which the direct medical care costs were Rs 168 billion. The total excise revenue from tobacco was Rs 174 billion. These findings would help policy-makers to arrive at informed decisions about health service provisions of government-sponsored health schemes. It would also help in understanding the huge economic loss to society and counter the arguments of the tobacco industry.

Discussion

There were many questions on study design and included population and their characteristics. A participant wanted to know whether costs to the caregiver had been included, as these are also costs related to tobacco. Another wanted to know about productivity loss beyond the workplace, as at home. Another asked whether costs in the private sector had been factored in, as 75% of the population gets treatment from the private sector. *Zarda* was another type of tobacco that had not been discussed. The presenter informed the meeting of the scientific reasons why these could not be taken into account. One participant said that in Gujarat, the national tribal ministry, was promoting tobacco cultivation, which was a cause for concern. The presenter replied that this was incorrect, and that tobacco farming is lucrative in Gujarat.

It was pointed out that the findings of these studies could not be generalized to the Region, as every country had its unique set of demographics and other factors.

4. Group work 1: Identification of a research agenda in the WHO South-East Asia Region

Moderator: Dr Nima-Asgari, WHO Country Office, Thailand

Facilitators: Dr Nandita Murukutla (Group 1) and Professor Nayantara Nayak (Group 2)

Participants were divided into two groups. Their task was to discuss the gaps in research needs in the area of alternative livelihoods of tobacco farmers and workers in the South-East Asia Region, based on global and regional evidence, and to identify an agenda to enhance research in the area. They were asked to focus especially on the health and economic consequences of tobacco farming and handling of tobacco leaves. After discussions, the rapporteur for each group made a presentation. (See Annex 3 for group presentations.)

Discussion

The moderator, Dr Nima-Asgari, led the discussion. He asked participants to think carefully to see if some important aspects had been missed, and identify next steps, such as making an action plan.

Three broad areas of research emerged from the discussions:

- Tobacco farming and health
- Tobacco farming and economics
- Tobacco farming and alternatives

Another aspect suggested was to identify what has worked in government policies, and how to break government control in tobacco promotion in all countries.

It was also suggested that there was not enough money to carry out research in so many areas, as suggested by Groups 1 and 2, and the topics needed to be prioritized. Participants arrived at a consensus that different aspects of research on tobacco had been conducted in various countries. A regional research agenda could be set up, where research from each country is collated, and each country does one specific aspect of the proposed research agenda. One of the areas that could be dropped was GTS, as it is temporary. Research on a regional basis could be conducted based on the commonalities between countries.

5. Tobacco farmers and workers as front groups for the tobacco industry

Moderator: Dr Vinayak M. Prasad

Tobacco industry interference in implementation of Articles 17 and 18

Dr Maria Carmen Audera-Lopez

Dr Audera-Lopez began by outlining the opposing goals of Articles 17 and 18 of the WHO FCTC and the tobacco industry. Whereas the overall goal of the WHO FCTC is to reduce suffering, disease and death due to tobacco use, with Articles 17 and 18 aiming to provide economically viable alternatives to tobacco growing and reduce the negative effects of tobacco farming, the tobacco industry's goal is to increase tobacco use and gain new markets. Alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers are needed to protect from the health and socioeconomic risks of tobacco growing, prepare farmers for a decrease in demand and protect them from manipulation by the tobacco industry. Although tobacco leaf is the key ingredient in cigarettes and other tobacco products, farmers get just about 0.4% of what is spent by the consumer.

Tobacco leaf production has moved away from developed countries to developing ones, which now produce 87% of the world's tobacco (2010). As the tobacco industry continues to seek new markets and adopt new technologies, the number of workers in tobacco farming and manufacturing is declining.

The tobacco industry interferes with tobacco control in many ways. It traps tobacco farmers in debt in many unfair ways, uses farmers as front groups to lobby against tobacco control by governments and the international community, exaggerates the benefits of tobacco growing, and conducts corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities related to tobacco farming. CSR is crucial to the tobacco industry as a way of restoring its damaged reputation, improve employee morale and retention, and increase the value of company stock. It also distracts governments and the community from the industry's core business. There are examples from many countries of industry-sponsored "beneficial" programmes. The International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA), comprising seven of the world's top tobacco companies, developed a strategy to undermine tobacco control at the global level and conduct outreach to politicians at the national level, and to staff of international organizations, including United Nations (UN) agencies and WHO. They used tobacco farmers as an effective front to lobby, but did little to support their long-term concerns. The industry has also done much to exaggerate the benefits of tobacco growing and the numbers employed, as well as loss of revenue to governments from crop substitution, and rural to urban migration due to this.

While the WHO FCTC advises crop substitution initially followed by a move away from growing tobacco, the tobacco industry, while apparently supporting crop substitution, calls for continuation of tobacco growing. Dr Audera-Lopez gave several examples of countries where the industry has conducted CSR activities, and even partnered with UN agencies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) to combat child labour in tobacco, and similar initiatives. It has partnered with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) on the occasion of World Environment Day, and otherwise, to highlight its commitment to protecting the environment in diverse ways.

A report by the UN Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control (2006) recommends that a "working group [be set up] that would examine the extent to which tobacco companies can invest and participate in socially responsible activities, in particular in relation with the work of the United Nations...."

Dr Audera-Lopez suggested some ways by which the tobacco industry's interference can be countered. The foremost is the need to be aware that it exists, and can be countered only through intersectoral collaboration. Policies and firewalls should be developed to assess the impact of industry-led programmes in the development of government programmes. She advised against partnering with, and sponsoring, industry-led programmes, irrespective of the area, and if this is unavoidable, the difference in goals should be at the forefront.

6. Group work 2: Identifying and developing effective strategies for alternative crops and livelihoods and for protecting growers and the environment from harm related to tobacco production

Moderators: *Dr Dharendra N. Sinha and Dr Maria Carmen Audera-Lopez*

Participants were again divided into two groups. The moderators asked them to think about the next steps and work out effective strategies for alternative livelihoods in the Region. These strategies should be based on the report of the working group on alternative livelihoods, and be effective, not mere action points. These strategies should be planned for a period of 5 years. The rapporteurs for each of the groups presented the findings of the groups. (See Annex 3 for group presentations.)

Facilitators: *Group 1 Dr Farrukh Qureshi, Group 2 Dr Rijo M. John*

Discussion

Participants offered comments on various aspects. They agreed that the points mentioned by both the groups were important but needed reinforcement. Champions, who have given up tobacco farming, should be engaged to convince other farmers to switch to alternative livelihoods. Scaling up pilot demonstration would also be convincing. Focal points should be identified at the local level and used to educate farmers.

Other environmental issues should also be considered. The meeting felt that having short-, medium-, and long-term plans and strategies would help to better achieve the objectives. Tobacco industry interference would need to be countered strongly and effectively. Countries should amend laws so that they support diversification.

World No Tobacco Day was felt to be an important forum at which the message of alternative livelihoods could be taken up.

7. Panels

The panels were assembled to discuss how various organizations, such as various UN organizations and civil society, can coordinate with the WHO FCTC Convention Secretariat to bring in alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers.

Panel 1: Coordination between WHO, WHO FCTC Convention Secretariat and Bloomberg Partners on alternative livelihoods

Moderator: Vineet Gill Munish, WHO Country Office, India

Panelists: Dr Vinayak Prasad, WHO, Geneva; Dr Carmen Audera-Lopez, Convention Secretariat

Dr Rana J. Singh, The Union, South-East Asia

Dr Nandita Murukutla, World Lung Foundation

Dr Suneel Padale, UNDP

The moderator asked the panelists to discuss areas where their organizations have synergy with the Convention Secretariat's work. With limited resources in countries, the most cost-efficient way of working would be to pool resources. She also reminded participants that countries where tobacco is not grown may not see the issue of alternative livelihoods as their problem. However, it is necessary for everyone to pool in.

The **World Lung Foundation** (WLF) is a part of Bloomberg Partners. The largest mandate is implementing the six MPOWER measures. Alternative livelihood is not a priority area, but WLF uses strategic

communication to change behaviours and social norms, and to strengthen policies. WLF has worked with India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and is now working with Thailand.

The representative from the **United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP) explained that UNDP's work is in development, which includes livelihood issues as well as agriculture. It also has a large programme on women in agriculture, and is already working on alternative livelihoods. The other common area of work could be ecological destruction. The *tendu* leaf is responsible for much ecological destruction. The cost of this and deforestation should be estimated. UNDP is working on honey and forest-based produce, which could be an alternative livelihood option. UNDP is working with several institutes across India on tribal development, and large awareness campaigns can be held for tribal and women.

The Union is supporting tobacco control in the Region through technical assistance, capacity-building and research. It also provides grants for tobacco control, and is currently supporting Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Nepal to implement the MPOWER strategies. Although the Union has not yet taken up work on the supply side measures through grants but has conducted some analyses on supply-side initiatives.

The representative said that The Union could collaborate with WHO and its country offices in the Region. It has some technical courses with WHO on demand-side issues, which could be used to build capacity. Together with WHO, it could develop some courses on supply-side issues as well. In the area of technical systems, it could work with partners to identify policies that encourage tobacco control. The representative also suggested that it could work with WHO on developing a knowledge hub for the Region to document case studies and other evidence.

Dr Audera-Lopez described the work of the **Convention Secretariat**. It follows the mandate of the Conference of the Parties (COP). It collaborates with different institutes, and various departments of organizations, e.g. WHO. It also collaborates with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), ILO, UNCTAD, UNDP and others in various areas. However, resources are limited; the shortfall is about 60%. It works from grants given by Parties and the European Union (EU). With a grant from the

EU, the Secretariat is conducting country assessments, as well as South–South and triangular projects. Articles 17 and 18 will be one of the topics for assessment.

The moderator summed up by saying that there was plenty of scope for collaboration in the neglected area of tobacco control. If all these organizations come together, over the next few years, it should be possible to come up with tangible solutions that can be implemented.

Panel 2: Coordination between WHO, WHO FCTC Convention Secretariat and civil society on alternative livelihoods

Moderator: *Dr E. Ulysses Dorotheo, South-East Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA)*

Panelists: *Dr Vinayak Prasad, WHO, Geneva; Dr Carmen Audera-Lopez, Convention Secretariat*

Dr Monika Arora, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)

Ms Seema Gupta, Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI)

Ms Bungon Rittiphakdee, SEATCA

The moderator asked panelists what role they felt their organizations could play in pushing for tobacco control in the Region and globally.

PHFI is a public–private partnership, whose mandate is research, advocacy and capacity-building, carried out by a multidisciplinary team. PHFI has the multidisciplinary and multisectoral team needed to carry out research in the area of alternative livelihoods. One of PHFI’s work areas is providing policy and action areas. It is a part of the Interministerial task force. PHFI has experience in conducting interventional research, and has worked with the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) to provide alternative skill sets (e.g. allied health workers) to *bidi* rollers.

VHAI already has a big ongoing tobacco control intervention with Bloomberg Partners. In 2008, VHAI did primary research with *bidi* rollers and found that the people were very poor and wanted to shift to other livelihood options. VHAI arranged training and organized them into self-help groups. They use this expertise to lobby with the government for a

change in policy. VHAI can also provide technical assistance and is a part of many groups, including front groups such as *bidi* union workers' group.

SEATCA helps countries in protecting farmers from the tobacco industry and assists countries in implementing the WHO FCTC. It has been working on Articles 1.3, 8 and 11. It has worked with country teams in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam, the Philippines and Indonesia to generate evidence for policy-makers on Articles 17 and 18. It closely monitors the tobacco industry and develops measures to counteract the strategies of the industry. The organization also promotes best practices. It has online knowledge centres for countries that belong to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and posts research findings on its website.

The moderator asked what civil society organizations (CSOs) can do to bring Articles 17 and 18 higher on the agenda of the next COP in 2016. Dr Audera-Lopez replied that if a CSO wants their area of interest to be taken up at the next COP, it should say so. Alternative livelihood is a global issue, not a regional one. India is host to the COP 7 in 2016, and thus it can bring it on the agenda, but what can be done should be decided by CSOs.

The participating CSOs felt that the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia should move this forward. A regional meeting could be organized before the COP to engage more partners. PHFI hopes to be ready with the results of some ongoing relevant research before that, and then have targets for reducing the number of hectares under cultivation. VHAI said that it could get more groups involved. The moderator felt that CSOs should work with governments to counter the tobacco industry. COP 7 in 2016 should give India the opportunity to raise the issue of smokeless tobacco and alternative livelihoods.

8. Group work 3: Recommendations to roll out the agenda on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers in the Region

Moderator: Dr Nyo Nyo Kyaing

Facilitators: Ms Farida Akhter (Group 1) and Dr Monika Arora (Group 2)

The participants were divided into two groups and asked to focus on how to roll out the agenda on alternative livelihoods in the Region in practical terms, based on the experiences and discussions in Group work 1 and 2. (See Annex 3 for group presentations.)

9. Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

The Expert Group Consultation on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers brought together experts from Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines, Thailand and Uganda.

The Consultation noted with concern the following issues:

- (1) The health, socioeconomic and environmental impacts of tobacco farming and handling is a serious problem in the Region, especially in Member countries that belong to the top twenty producers of tobacco in the world (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Thailand).
- (2) A “whole-of-government” approach to fully advance key demand as well as supply reduction measures is difficult to attain unless the agropolitical economy of tobacco growing and livelihood issues of farmers and workers are simultaneously addressed.
- (3) There are few pilot studies/best practices and limited documentation of national and regional best practices on tobacco farmers moving to other crops and/or other livelihood options.

- (4) There is a need to map national/regional knowledge and share experiences.
- (5) Negligible operational research had been conducted in the Region to assess the likely impact of full implementation of the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) on the livelihood of farmers and other related sectors, as well as developing the government mechanisms available to address the impact.
- (6) The need to develop and roll out a practical road map for capacity building of countries on alternative livelihoods in a phased/prioritized manner was identified, basically with a view to support tobacco-growing farmers and workers in the Region who were moving to economically viable alternate livelihood options.

Recommendations

- (1) *Identify research gaps and prioritize research* in accordance with the country situation. Research domains that were identified included the following:
 - (a) Health consequences of tobacco farming and handling of tobacco leaves, with a special focus on women and children's health, green tobacco sickness, and awareness of the consequences of being in contact with tobacco leaves among farmers and workers;
 - (b) Socioeconomic and environmental consequences of tobacco farming, including women and child labour in the production and various processes related to curing/storage of tobacco leaves;
 - (c) Addressing knowledge gaps on sustainable, viable alternative livelihoods to tobacco farming;
 - (d) Use of existing policies, programmes and mechanisms to address the area of alternative livelihoods in line with the provisions of Articles 17 and 18 of the WHO FCTC.

- (2) *Develop a regional strategic framework* with a specific road map on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers. The development of the strategic framework shall be assisted by the Regional Office, in coordination with the WHO FCTC Secretariat, and shall take into account best practices from the Region as well as other regions. The strategy should focus on the following:
- (a) Constituting a national mechanism on alternative livelihoods and enhancing its capacity;
 - (b) Mapping existing policies and research on the health, socio-economic and environmental impact of tobacco farming and on the potential alternative livelihood options in the policy plans;
 - (c) Promoting research on the health, environment, social and economic aspects of alternative livelihood options;
 - (d) Illustrating the determinants of and obstacles to alternative livelihoods with the use of case studies/best practices;
 - (e) Encouraging field demonstrations/pilot interventions to establish the economic sustainability of alternative livelihoods;
 - (f) Engaging effectively with tobacco farmers and growers, farmers' institutions and academia, and having them participate in policy development and implementation, in line with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC and its guidelines;
 - (g) Engaging civil society and academia in formulating, implementing and assessing policies and programmes related to alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers;
 - (h) Developing educational sensitization and training programmes for tobacco farmers and workers;
 - (i) Ensuring government support to farmers and workers for sustainable development programmes on crop diversification and alternative livelihoods;

- (j) Identifying strategies that industry uses to promote tobacco cultivation using farmers and workers as front groups, and developing mechanisms to counter the same;
 - (k) Formulating policies and, where appropriate, amending the tobacco control and related laws to include alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers;
 - (l) Establishing a knowledge hub in the Region on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers.
- (3) Suggested roll-out plan for regional initiatives on alternative livelihoods.

FOR WHO and the WHO FCTC Convention Secretariat

- (a) Development of WHO-guided multicountry research on best practices in the field of alternative livelihoods
- (b) The WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia to organize a regional-level workshop on the status of alternative livelihoods in the Region prior to COP7 to establish a uniform regional position on the subject
- (c) Establishment of a regional knowledge hub on alternative livelihoods
- (d) Development of advocacy plans, including information, education and communication (IEC), and media advocacy materials at the regional and country levels.

FOR COUNTRIES

- (a) Conducting sensitization programmes/campaigns related to the provisions of Articles 17 and 18 of the WHO FCTC at the national and subnational levels
- (b) Assisting in the establishment of a country-level mechanism on alternative livelihoods options for tobacco growers and workers
- (c) Including alternatives to tobacco cultivation in national tobacco control laws/policy regulations

- (d) Demonstrating large-scale successful intervention models and economic incentives
- (e) Identifying leaders and champions favouring alternative livelihoods from within the farming sector and promoting them as role models
- (f) Mapping current/existing schemes/programmes with a view to include alternative livelihood opportunities in the same.

10. Closing session

Moderator: *Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi*

Dr Thamarangsi made some suggestions on the recommendations. He suggested that recommendations to countries should identify at which level they were to be targeted, whether at CSOs, academia, or other stakeholders. He also said that the recommendations should be country specific. He suggested that as the tobacco industry was transnational, there was a need to look beyond countries. He congratulated the participants on their enthusiastic and productive participation, and reiterated that it was a very important battlefront, not only for health reasons but also socioeconomic ones.

Dr Nyo Nyo Kyaing gave a vote of thanks. She thanked the Regional Director, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, and the Deputy Programme Manager, Mr Tawhid Nawaz, for their approval of and support for holding this important meeting. She also thanked the Director, Dr Thamarangsi, for his full support, Dr Veia Da Costa e Silva, Head of the Convention Secretariat for her technical support, Dr Carmen Audera-Lopez and all the experts for their work. She further thanked all staff and colleagues at the Regional Office.

Dr Thamarangsi declared the meeting closed.

Annex 1

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Annex 2

Agenda of the meeting

- (1) Opening
- (2) Global implementations of Articles 17 and 18 of the WHO FCTC and examples of best practices
- (3) Production and trade of tobacco: a regional perspective
- (4) Health, environment and social impact of tobacco farming
- (5) Country presentations: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Brazil, Kenya, Uganda, Philippines
- (6) Coordination
- (7) Group works on:
 - (a) Identification of research agenda in SEAR
 - (b) Identifying and developing effective strategies for alternate crops and livelihoods and for protecting growers and the environment from harm related to tobacco production
 - (c) Recommendations to roll out the agenda on alternative livelihood for tobacco farmers and workers in the Region.
- (8) Recommendations and closing.

Annex 3

Group work presentations

Group work 1: Identification of a research agenda in the WHO South-East Asia Region

Group 1

This group started by identifying some pressing issues that would help to set the research agenda. These are given below:

- Why farmers are continuing with tobacco farming, despite concerns
- What will influence them to shift
- How can sustainable shifting to alternatives be ensured
- What is the perception of policy-makers and other stakeholders (through focused group discussions) on the issue
- Situational analysis of existing policies with a focus on rural development policies
- What priority interventions are needed.

The group identified the following research themes:

- Estimation of the farming burden of tobacco – health, socioeconomic and environmental costs of tobacco farming
- Special focus on green tobacco sickness
- Health impact of tobacco farming on women and children's health
- Analysis of government policies and interventions in relation to WHO FCTC Articles 17 and 18
- Compliance of tobacco farming with the country's environmental and climate change regulations
- Comparing the benefits of tobacco farming to that of other crops
- Child labour issues – scope of the problem and solutions

- What crop combinations can farmers use to shift out of tobacco without facing severe economic hardship?
- Identifying tobacco industry interference in tobacco farmers and suggesting solutions.

Group 2

The research gaps identified by this group were as follows:

- Comparative analysis with non-tobacco livelihood options in all domains (e.g. child labour, pesticide exposure, etc.)
- Research study on scaled-up alternative livelihood programmes
- Cost–benefit analysis of alternative livelihoods
- The effect of demand-side tobacco control government policies on tobacco production
- Assess the tobacco industry mechanisms for tobacco production vis-à-vis government mechanisms for alternative livelihoods (existing plus gaps)
- Assess the reasons for farmers not shifting to evidence-based economically profitable alternatives
- What are the areas of policy coherence and inconsistency between tobacco control and tobacco promotion
- Identify obstacles and catalysts to the process of diversification
- Assess the awareness levels among tobacco farmers of the health consequences of growing tobacco.

Group work 2: Identifying and developing effective strategies for alternative crops and livelihoods and for protecting growers and the environment from harm related to tobacco production

Group 1 identified various strategy areas and elaborated on these.

- **Mainstreaming** alternative crops/livelihood options into governmental rural development programmes
 - enabling national coordinating mechanisms/focal points/task force
 - assessing effective and participatory engagement of farmers' institutes, academia and civil society organizations in all strategies

- **Promoting research**
 - mapping relevant stakeholders
 - documenting and disseminating existing evidence of transition to alternative crops in the region/globally
 - assessing current policies and programmes that favour or deter alternative livelihoods
 - conducting comprehensive field demonstrations/pilot Interventions to establish the economic viability of alternative crops
 - developing a knowledge hub/resource centre
- **Establishing mechanisms within existing system**
- **Understanding tobacco industry strategies**
 - Understanding how companies keep farmers in tobacco
 - understanding demographic and corporate dynamics enabling promotion of the tobacco-growing sector
 - understanding obstacles/challenges to switching
 - developing policy mechanisms to prevent tobacco industry strategies to promote tobacco
- **World No Tobacco Day Theme 2016 or 2017** – this could be on alternative livelihoods.

Group 2 also had broad strategy areas under which they identified substrategies.

- **Promoting research**
 - identifying regions that have moved away from tobacco farming
 - identifying country-/region-specific enabling determinants for and obstacles to diversification
 - conducting demand forecast studies on organic food crops in urban areas
 - identifying strategies that industry uses to promote tobacco cultivation

- **Developing educational and training programmes for workers and growers**
 - identifying people at the grass-roots level who can influence tobacco workers and growers
 - using farmers who have migrated from tobacco farming conduct training of trainers
 - focusing educational programmes on alternative crops that are profitable, and the health and environmental consequences of tobacco.
- **Removing obstacles to diversification**
 - using the research results to devise counterstrategies
 - using trained tobacco control front groups (progressive farmers)
 - developing a time-bound phasing-out strategy that involves farmers in the process.
- **Keeping coherence among policies**
 - making it mandatory for ministries to set targets
 - Ministry of Health to lead on the interministerial task force
 - amending the current law to include diversification.
- **Establishing mechanisms within existing system**
 - conducting advocacy to include alternative livelihoods in rural development schemes and national skill development programmes.

GROUP WORK 3: Recommendations to roll out the agenda on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers in the Region

Group 1

- WHO Regional Office should organize a regional-level workshop to bring together government agencies, international organizations and CSOs before COP 7 (based on policy mapping).
- Viable alternative crops should be identified, including value chain analysis.

- One or two field demonstrations/pilot interventions should be done to establish the economic viability of alternative crops in each high-burden country.
- An advocacy plan should be developed, such as the Voices of Victims of Tobacco Farming (VoVTF).
- Positive stories and good practices of diversification should be documented.
- An advocacy plan should be developed at both the regional and country levels.

Country level

- An interministerial task force and working group should be constituted and consultations held.
- Stakeholders at the country level must be sensitized and their awareness of Articles 17 and 18 enhanced.
- Every country should establish a country knowledge hub starting with desk review.
- Alternatives to tobacco should be included in the country's tobacco control laws, and policy regulations issued and enforced.

Group 2

Action point 1

- WHO-guided multi-country research should be conducted on best practices in countries and enabling determinants identified.
- A dissemination and advocacy workshop should be held involving government and civil society on the results of the above research.

Action point 2

- A regional resource hub (physical and virtual) should be established as a repository of best practices, and active support provided to research, advocacy and capacity building on Articles 17 and 18.

- A media advocacy kit should be developed.
- Information, education and communication (IEC) materials should be developed and training of trainers organized.

Action point 3

- Large-scale interventions should be rolled out:
 - to demonstrate large-scale successful intervention models on alternative livelihoods and cultivation
 - champion farmers should be identified and front groups created
 - regional front groups should hold champion farmers/workers meetings
 - economic incentives should be provided to progressive farmers as well as to bidi rollers.

Action point 4

- All countries should form an interministerial task force on alternative livelihoods and ensure that civil societies and the government implement the agenda for Articles 17 and 18.
- Country-specific targets should be set for phasing out tobacco farming and livelihoods.
- Policy measures should be initiated in the legal framework.

Action point 5

- Mapping should be done of current rural development and skill development schemes with a view to include alternative livelihood opportunities in rural development schemes and national skill development programmes.

Tobacco farming and handling cause serious health and environmental problems. Owing to constant exposure in working with tobacco, farmers and workers face health-related issues of toxicity, of which green tobacco sickness is the best known. In addition, workers face the adverse consequences of the use of excessive harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Although several economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco growing have been identified through studies in various regions of the world, research and pilot projects in the area of alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers have been limited in the South-East Asia Region.

An expert group consultation was held at the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia in New Delhi on 30–31 July 2015 to bring best practices and scientific evidence in alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers on one platform. The meeting was attended by experts in various fields from Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines, Thailand and Uganda.

The meeting adopted strong recommendations, including identification of research gaps and prioritized research, development of a regional strategic framework with a specific roadmap on alternative livelihoods for tobacco farmers and workers, and a roll-out plan to move forward with regional initiatives.



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