

**SMALL GRANTS RESEARCH COMPETITION TO SUPPORT RATIFICATION,  
IMPLEMENTATION AND/OR ENFORCEMENT OF THE FRAMEWORK  
CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL (FCTC)**

**FINAL PROGRESS REPORT**

**COVER PAGE**

PROJECT TITLE: Facilitating FCTC Implementation through Media Personnel Support

FILE #: 1000-024-133

COUNTRY(IES) UNDER STUDY: Vietnam

RESEARCH INSTITUTION(S): HealthBridge Canada (Formerly PATH Canada) in Vietnam

TOTAL BUDGET: 9,830 CAD

PROJECT COMMENCEMENT DATE: November 15, 2005

PROJECT COMPLETION DATE: November 15, 2006

DATE REPORT SUBMITTED TO RITC: December 15, 2006

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## **Project's Overall Purpose**

The overall objective of this project was to facilitate implementation of FCTC policies and programs through the identification of ways in which to strengthen media support of tobacco control.

## **Achievement of Objectives**

Objective 1: To characterize the gaps in media personnel's exposure to tobacco-related information.

*Our research to identify the gaps in exposure to tobacco-related information revealed the following:*

- Media access to tobacco control information remains limited. Health reporters typically received the most information, while economic and social-cultural reporters received the least. Of the 20 health correspondents interviewed, two had never had access to tobacco control information, one rarely received it, four sometimes received it, twelve received it once a month and one received it once a week.
- The major sources of the tobacco control information that was received were tobacco control agencies (32.1% of respondents), conferences (21.4%) and reports (21.4%).
- The information received by the media focused on tobacco's health hazards, anti-smoking activities in Vietnam and other countries, and tobacco control policies.

Objective 2: To identify the factors which inhibit and facilitate positive tobacco control media coverage.

*Our research to identify the factors which inhibit and facilitate positive tobacco control media coverage revealed the following:*

- Media personnel's knowledge and perception towards smoking and tobacco control:
  - Understanding of the negative effects of tobacco use on the health of smokers and the community was high among media personnel. However, they showed little awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco to the economy and environment.
  - Strong support for tobacco control policies exists among media personnel, with most of those interviewed reporting being worried about the current smoking prevalence in Vietnam.
  - There is little media attention currently paid to tobacco control and the FCTC because of the nature of tobacco control issues (too much emphasis on health) and the typical media activities (follow hot issues only)
- Media personnel's awareness of FCTC and their opinions of FCTC implementation in Vietnam:
  - ◇ Awareness of the FCTC was generally low among media personnel: more than one fourth of the persons interviewed reported that they had never heard of the FCTC. However, almost 95% of the health correspondents knew about the FCTC and that it had been ratified by Vietnam.
  - ◇ Knowledge of the FCTC's contents was low: more than 85% of the interviewees could not correctly recall at least 3 tobacco control measures put forward in the FCTC.

- ◊ Belief in the effectiveness of the TC measures proposed in the FCTC was also low: some of the respondents doubted the feasibility of the measures in Vietnam, pointing out that barriers included low public awareness, tobacco industry tactics, and a lack of resources.
- ◊ In spite of these points, support for the FCTC was high among the media personnel: they understood the necessity of strictly implementing the measures developed by the convention.
- Training: Very few of the media personnel interviewed had attended a media training course on tobacco control over the past six months.

Objective 3: To identify gaps in the information about tobacco control provided to the public by conducting media surveillance of tobacco-related news in Vietnam, monitoring coverage of issues.

*Our media surveillance and interviews with high-ranking journalists revealed the following:*

- Nearly third-quarters (73.9%) of the 425 tobacco-related newspaper clippings collected between August 2005 and Jul 2006 favored tobacco control. The remaining articles demonstrated either a pro-industry slant or neutral attitudes towards the tobacco control work.
- Most of the pro-Industry articles discussed the business success and economic contribution of the tobacco industry (29 articles), and its philanthropy activities (39).
- Pro-TC articles appeared more often when there was a media advocacy campaign or during the National Tobacco-Free Week and World No Tobacco Day.
- Anti-smoking messages produced by the media were poor, boring, and repetitive, according to many high-ranking journalists.
- The topics covered most often in the Pro-TC newspaper clippings were: health hazards of smoking (14.9%), smoke free policy (13.6%), taxation (12.7%) and smuggling (9.8%). Other important topics such as the health effects of secondhand smoking, economic costs of smoking, and cigarette advertisement and promotion bans were not often addressed.
- 80% of the articles on the health hazards of smoking were written using international sources. For other topics, the media personnel mainly used local information sources as input for their articles.

Objective 4: To identify the extent to which media personnel opinions and attitudes are influenced directly (newsletters, direct mail) or indirectly (advertising, corporate philanthropy) by the tobacco industry in Vietnam.

*Our examination of the extent to which media personnel opinions and attitudes are influenced by the tobacco industry revealed the following:*

- Media personnel had little direct exposure to the tobacco industry. Any information received from the industry was primarily about sales turnover, business performance, sponsorship, and poverty alleviation programs.
- Many journalists did not feel that the industry should expand; however they all stated a belief that tobacco manufacturing contributes to the country's economy.

Objective 5: To identify methods and avenues through which media personnel can serve as tobacco control media advocates.

*We identified the following methods and avenues:*

- Tobacco control organisations should be proactive in contacting the media, setting up a media network, organizing media training courses on tobacco control and FCTC, and launching more media campaigns.
- Information provided to the media should focus on the negative economic and environmental effects of tobacco, as well as on the benefits and effectiveness of tobacco control policies.
- Managers of media organisations should also be exposed to basic tobacco control information so that they can recognise the importance of the issue.

*(Pls see the details in Appendix 1 for the findings of semi-structured survey and in-depth interviews: Media concern about FCTC and tobacco control activities in Vietnam and Appendix 2 for the Findings of Newspaper Clipping Database Analysis for 8/2005 – 7/2006)*

This research was the first-ever survey on media awareness and understanding of tobacco control issues in Vietnam. Results of the research will greatly inform efforts to improve media advocacy and public education to facilitate FCTC implementation in the country.

## **Research Methodology**

Interactive data collection methods, combining qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (semi-structured survey) techniques, were used to yield a broader understanding of the multidimensional influences on media personnel opinions and attitudes towards tobacco control, FCTC, and the tobacco industry.

### ***Study population and sampling:***

*For media surveillance:* The thirty-one most influential and most read newspapers were selected; selection was based on the number of copies per issue sold (information provided by the Faculty of Journalism) and upon the advice of the Deputy Head of the Press Department under the Communist Party's Central Committee on Culture and Ideology. TV, radios and news websites were not included as the surveillance of these types of media would be technically complicated and too costly for this project.

*For in-depth interviews and semi-structured survey:* Initially, only the journalists from the newspapers selected for media surveillance were targeted. However, during the process of sampling, the research team noticed that TV, radio and websites also had an important influence on public opinion. Interviewing journalists from radio and television stations and websites would provide a more comprehensive overview of the knowledge and attitude of media personnel towards tobacco control and, then to identify the ways to strengthen support to tobacco control from the media personnel in general.

As a result, twenty editors-in-chief, deputy editors-in-chief, and chiefs of news rooms were contacted by the project team for in-depth interviews. Sixty reporters (including 20 health reporters, 20 economic reporters and 20 entertainment and social reporters) were also invited to participate in the semi-structured survey. These journalists represented 40 important newspapers, radio stations, TV stations and news websites, as suggested by the Faculty of Journalism.

### ***Questionnaire design:***

The researchers developed the questionnaires for the in-depth interviews and semi-structured survey with assistance from a technical advisor. The two questionnaires were tested and modified before use.

### ***Data entry and analysis***

Data collected from the semi-structure survey were coded, entered onto the computer and cleaned. The data analysis was performed using the SPSS software. The in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

The media surveillance was conducted on a daily basis from 1st August 2005 to 31st July 2006. The clippings collected were classified as pro-TC, pro-Industry or neutral, categorized by topic, and a summary description entered into a database using MS Access Software.

### **Impact and Utilization of Results**

The research results were used as the key input materials of a media training course on tobacco control which was held in late October 2006 in cooperation with the Press Department of the Communist Party's Central Committee on Culture and Ideology.

A report was prepared that included recommendations on how to strengthen media support for tobacco control to ensure successful implementation and enforcement of FCTC. The report was sent to the Vietnam National Committee on Smoking and Health, the WHO in Vietnam, Vietnam Public Health Association, Press Department of the Communist Party's Central Committee on Culture and Ideology, Press Faculty of the National University and Vietnamese tobacco control activists as a reference document for their media advocacy work.

Based on the results of research, a new two-year project was developed by HealthBridge with a grant from the UICC/ACS that seeks to increase media capacity to advocate for tobacco control and to positively influence public education. This new project uses results of the RITC-funded research to fill the information vacuum faced by the media and the general public by developing accurate information packages on tobacco control issues

### **Dissemination**

The final research report was written in Vietnamese and translated into English. Both versions were made available for distribution to local TC activists, policy makers, and journalists.

An abstract of the project was sent to the World Conference on Tobacco or Health (Washington DC July 2006) and included in the WCOTH documentary CD. A poster outlining the project's results was also presented at the conference.

A presentation on the research findings was made at the media training course on tobacco control organised by HealthBridge and the Press Department of the Communist Party's Central Committee on Culture and Ideology.

A summary of the project was posted on HealthBridge's website.

The research findings will also be disseminated at national seminars and workshops on tobacco control. Finally, a project abstract was developed for the Asia Pacific Conference on

Tobacco Control, which will be held in Oct 2007.

### **Capacity Building**

The research was conducted by HealthBridge's media officer and the researcher from the Journalism Faculty, in consultation with HealthBridge's Tobacco Control Program Manager. As a result, the media officer and researcher learned a significant amount and improved their skills in sampling: they learned how to develop questionnaires, conduct interviews, analyse data, and write reports. The young researcher from the Faculty of Journalism of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities also gained knowledge on the FCTC and tobacco control work in Vietnam. Through the interviews undertaken through the research, the two researchers also developed close relations with many media personnel. This will be very helpful for their future work.

### **Involvement of Key Stakeholders**

The Deputy Head of the Press Department under the Communist Party's Central Committee on Culture and Ideology provided advice about which newspapers and news websites would be most suitable for the research. The Faculty of Journalism of University of Social Sciences and Humanities provided information about the number of copies per issue of newspaper were being distributed. This helped the research team to identify the most important and most-widely circulated newspapers for the research.

The semi-structured survey and in-depth interviews which were conducted with many reporters and high-ranking journalists attracted their attention to tobacco control issues and FCTC.

### **Contact with Other Researchers**

HealthBridge's media officer attended the "Research for Action on the FCTC" Workshop held in Ottawa in October 2005. The workshop gave her the opportunity to meet other researchers from the first and second small grant rounds to discuss potential collaborative work, and how to share and document information, good models, and success stories from their projects. At the sub-workshop "*The "what", "why" and "how" of Qualitative Research*", the media officer received a lot of useful contributions about designing questionnaires for her research from other participants.

As the technical advisor to the project was the fund recipient of the first round, she provided helpful experience to the implementation of the project.

The questionnaires of the semi-structured survey and in-depth interviews were translated into English for circulation within the D-Group network coordinated by the RITC.

### **Project Management**

The project was implemented in line with the time schedule and is expected to be completed on time. There was no hindrance in terms of human resources or budget.

It should be noted that the media surveillance of tobacco relating articles and pieces of news started in August 2005, right after HealthBridge Vietnam received a notification of the grant from RITC. It was 2.5 months earlier than the signed commencement of the project. This helped to ensure that by August 2006, the one-year media surveillance was completed and ready for analysis in September 2006. No expense was charged to the project before signing. This work was possible because HealthBridge Vietnam has a media officer working permanently on its programs, including tobacco control, and a strong network had been developed with media before the project commenced.

**Future Research**

*Highlight and discuss any future tobacco control research that might arise from this project.*

N/A

**Comments on RITC's support**

RITC has successfully performed its role of coordinating the D-Group, updating research activities of the grantees and circulating the research tools and publications of the grant projects. The workshop held by RITC in Oct 2005 was a great opportunity for the grantees to share experience with each other.