

Strengthening the Vietnam Public Health Association's participation in FCTC implementation



Final Narrative and Financial Report July 2007

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Final Narrative Report

Background

Vietnam ratified the FCTC in November 2004, and the Treaty became active in March 2005. However, in practical terms, tobacco control in the country still has many challenges to overcome: 1) very low cigarette taxes as compared to the FCTC recommendation; 2) weak enforcement measures for implementation of smoke free policy in public places; 3) tobacco advertisement is still common at point of sale and enforcement seems to be weak and/or ineffective; 4) plans for implementing pictorial health warnings face strong resistance from tobacco industries and hesitance of the government.

The Vietnam Public Health Association (VPHA) has a potentially important role to play in coordinating the efforts of non-government organizations in tobacco control, including making the TCWG a powerful political advocate for the development and enforcement of tobacco control policies and laws, and therefore for FCTC implementation. Through its provincial network, VPHA is capable of greatly expanding tobacco control activities at the grass root level and making tobacco control a strong mass movement. The particular areas of tobacco control in which VPHA and its branches could have strong influence are: (i) supporting the implementation of smoke free policies; (ii) serving as a watchdog against Tobacco Industry activities related to advertising and sponsorship; (iii) conducting public education on the effects of smoking and passive smoking, and developing a new social norm of a smoke-free lifestyle. At the national level, they could also be a strong supporter for policy advocacy by initiating the discussions and meeting with government agencies and policy makers to support legislation.

Within the framework of its project "Mainstreaming Tobacco Control in Vietnam" funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, HealthBridge Vietnam, in collaboration with the Vietnam Public Health Association, helped several provincial Public Health Associations to develop their own tobacco control programs. These provincial-level programs included such components as the development of a multi-sectoral network for implementing tobacco control policies, implementation of a smoke-free policy in public places, monitoring compliance with a government regulation on the ban of cigarette advertisements, and monitoring of tobacco industry sponsorship and product promotion activities. Due to a shortfall in the funding required to implement all the planned activities, this small project was designed to support selected provincial-level activities. Six activities were originally approved for funding. However, some of these activities were ultimately undertaken prior to final funding approval from Health Canada (HealthBridge supported these activities with its own funds as an in-kind contribution). Therefore, two additional complementary activities (1-6 and 1-7) were added and are included in the report below.

Goals and Objectives

The overall purpose of this project was to improve the capacity of the Vietnam Public Health Association, and its Provincial Public Health Associations, to contribute to the development and

implementation of tobacco control policies in Vietnam, and therefore to the implementation of the FCTC. Its specific objectives were:

1. To support the development, implementation, and monitoring of smoke free policies.
2. To increase public awareness of tobacco control issues in Nha Trang City.
3. To increase the capacity of Tobacco Control Working Group members to advocate for FCTC implementation.

Activities, Outputs, and Outcomes

The following highlights the primary activities undertaken and outputs and outcomes achieved.

Objective 1: Support the development, implementation, and monitoring of smoke free policies.

Activity 1-1: Assist the Provincial Public Health Association (PPHA) and the Department of Education and Training to develop and implement a smoke-free schools policy in Nha Trang city (Khanh Hoa province).	
Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Instructions for a smoke-free school were developed by the PPHA and the Department of Education and Training.</p> <p>A training workshop was held and attended by 15 school heads.</p> <p>An internal smoke-free policy was developed by the schools. School staff, teachers, and children were provided with information about the policy.</p> <p>Smoke-free signs were posted in classrooms and school offices.</p>	<p>A smoke-free policy has been adopted and implemented in fifteen secondary schools, colleges, and/or universities in Nha Trang City.</p>
Activity 1-2: Assist the Provincial Public Health Association and the Department of Transportation in Nha Trang city to develop a smoke-free public transportation policy and implementation plan.	
Outputs	Outcomes
<p>A smoke-free policy for buses and bus stations was developed.</p> <p>The policy was communicated to clients and drivers.</p> <p>Smoke-free signs were displayed throughout bus stations and on buses.</p> <p>Designated smoking areas (DSRs) were established at bus stations.</p>	<p>All bus routes in Nha Trang City now operate under a smoke-free policy. This includes stations and individual buses.</p>
Activity 1-3: Assist the Provincial Public Health Association and the Pedagogic College in Dong Thap province to develop and implement a smoke-free college policy and to develop a tobacco control curriculum in the college's training program.	
Outputs	Outcomes
<p>An internal smoke-free regulation (similar to a policy) was developed.</p> <p>Information about the regulation was communicated to all college teachers, staff members, students, and shopkeepers (located on the college campus).</p> <p>College teachers, staff members, students, and shopkeepers signed a commitment to abide by the regulation.</p> <p>Smoke-free signs were posted in all classrooms and college offices.</p>	<p>A smoke-free policy has been adopted and enforced at the college.</p> <p>More than 5000 students have increased awareness and understanding of tobacco control issues after participating in the</p>

<p>A monitoring team was organized to oversee implementation of the regulation, particularly in the residence hall, where violations occurred.</p> <p>An anti-smoking campaign was designed and implemented, and included an “anti-smoking” painting competition organized by the students. In addition, tobacco control was included as component of a “healthy environment festival” organized by the college for participants from colleges and universities throughout South and Central Vietnam.</p> <p>Tobacco control was added to the teaching curriculum, covering issues related to the harmful effects of smoking and how an institution could be made smoke-free.</p>	tobacco control curriculum.
<p>Activity 1-4: Assist the Provincial Public Health Association in Yen Bai province to develop and implement a smoke-free hospitals, health offices, and medical college policy.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Outputs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Outcomes</p>
<p>A Circular was issued by the Provincial Health Department requesting all hospitals and offices under its authority to adopt and implement the smoke-free policy.</p> <p>Enforcement measures were developed and adopted.</p> <p>Compliance with the smoke-free policy was included within the annual review process for hospital staff and buildings.</p> <p>A training workshop was conducted on the topic of implementing smoke-free hospitals and offices.</p> <p>Representatives of 31 organisations and agencies that fall under the purview of the Yen Bai Health Department signed a commitment to implement the smoke-free policy.</p> <p>Information about the policy was communicated to departmental employees and clients through signs, stickers, and other media.</p>	<p>Thirty-one organizations and agencies incorporated smoke-free components into their institutional regulations and competition standards.</p> <p>The prevalence of smoking dropped significantly in the health facilities: the number of employees who smoked was reduced from 234 to 52, while the number of patients and their relatives who smoked at the facilities also declined significantly.</p>
<p>Activity 1-5: Assist the Provincial Public Health Association and the Medical College in Yen Bai province to develop and implement a smoke-free college policy.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Outputs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Outcomes</p>
<p>An anti-smoking steering committee was established at the college</p> <p>Teachers and students signed a commitment to comply with a smoke-free policy.</p> <p>The Medical College Management Board signed a commitment with its service center to not sell cigarettes.</p> <p>Anti-smoking panels, posters, and no-smoking signs were displayed throughout the college campus.</p> <p>An anti-smoking group comprised of 10 members conducted regular monitoring of compliance with the policy and issued fines to those who violated it.</p>	<p>The college’s regulations have incorporated a smoking ban, and smoking is now banned in all classrooms, laboratories, and entertainment centers.</p>

Activity 1-6: Assist the Provincial Health Association to build a model “Smoke-free school” for Quang Trung high school in Nam Dinh province.	
Outputs	Outcomes
<p>A smoke-free regulation was developed and adopted.</p> <p>All of the teachers and 94% of the students signed a commitment to comply with the regulation.</p> <p>Smoke-free panels (large posters) were developed and displayed in the school; in addition leaflets on the regulation and the harmful effects of smoking were designed, printed, and disseminated.</p> <p>Dialogues were facilitated by the VPHA officer on the harmful effects of smoking. This also included skill development for schoolgirls to raise objections to smoking and for schoolboys to reject peer pressure to smoke.</p> <p>A tobacco control club was organized; 21% of the students joined the club. The club’s managing board includes the Youth Union secretary and a representative of each grade. A detailed working plan was developed.</p>	<p>A smoke-free policy has been adopted and enforced at the school.</p> <p>More than 880 students have increased awareness and understanding of tobacco control issues.</p>
Activity 1-7: Assist the Provincial Health Association to strengthen the implementation of smoke-free indicators during the building of the “cultural and health villages” in Dong Thap Province.	
Outputs	Outcomes
<p>The Healthy and Cultural Village (HCV) movement development was reviewed, and its successes and challenges identified.</p> <p>A roadmap of cultural hamlets was developed.</p> <p>An action plan was developed with multi-sector cooperation for the creation of a cultural hamlet model that would meet Standard No 6 (No smoking at home and in public places.).</p> <p>A training course was organized that addressed how a cultural hamlet could be developed; 77 participants attended. The course focused on communications skills for the establishment of smoke-free homes and public places, including the hosting of smoke-free weddings and funerals.</p> <p>Leaflets, posters, and stickers were designed, produced and disseminated.</p>	<p>All families in 11 hamlets have adopted a smoke-free home policy.</p> <p>61% of funerals undertaken following the training were implemented smoke-free.</p> <p>80% of weddings undertaking following the training were implemented smoke-free.</p> <p>100% of the hamlet offices have adopted smoke-free policies.</p>

Objective 2: Increase public awareness of tobacco control issues in Nha Trang City.

Activity 2-1: Design and disseminate information, education and information (IEC) materials to increase public and local government awareness of the importance of tobacco control and the FCTC.	
Outputs	Outcomes
<p>Anti-smoking advertisement panels were displayed in public places.</p> <p>A “Club for Women with Non-smoking Family Members” was established</p>	<p>Awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco use was increased in Nha Trang City.</p>

<p>in five Women's Union units in the City of Nha Trang.</p> <p>Twelve public meetings were held to discuss the harmful effects of smoking on the public and youth.</p> <p>Three reports were produced and aired on local television addressing tobacco control and how to implement smoke-free policies in public places.</p>	
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Objective 3: Increase the capacity of the Tobacco Control Working Group members to advocate for FCTC implementation.

Activity 3-1: Develop and host capacity building training event for TCWG members.	
Outputs	Outcomes
<p>A workshop was organized and hosted to build the capacity of the TCWG members.</p> <p>The findings of several research studies were presented (including a baseline survey on the social acceptance of tobacco use in Vietnam, a study on the use of tobacco package health warnings, and the economics/costs of tobacco use in Vietnam); this facilitated the sharing of experiences and lessons learned amongst the TCWG members.</p> <p>Participants included 150 representatives of local and international NGOs, donors, partners, mass organizations and Government institutions.</p>	<p>Participants gained new knowledge about research findings on key aspects of tobacco control that could be used for promoting tobacco control policy in Vietnam.</p> <p>Participants gained new knowledge about other organizations' experiences working and advocating for tobacco control and carrying research studies on tobacco in Vietnam. These experiences will be adapted and utilised by the participants in their future work.</p> <p>Participants gained key experience in networking.</p>

Conclusion

The project complemented a larger project that aims to develop the capacity of the Vietnam Public Health Association to take a leadership role in tobacco control, particularly at the provincial level. Except for the province of Khanh Hoa, the sites involved in this project are located in remote and poor areas of Vietnam, where tobacco control has not yet been seen as a priority. This project was valuable in motivating and stimulating the new Provincial Public Health Associations to become active in tobacco control, particularly in the implementation of smoke-free policies. The project also provided PPHA staff and partners with basic knowledge and skills in tobacco control, which is important for them to help the government in FCTC implementation. The capacity of the Vietnam Public Health Association in tobacco control and its role in coordinating the provincial branches has thereby been enhanced.