



Education, communication and training for tobacco control

Why conduct education, communication and training?

Is it a legal obligation?

Yes, it is. Article 12 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) states that:

"Each Party shall promote and strengthen public awareness of tobacco control issues, using all available communication tools, as appropriate. Towards this end, each Party shall adopt and implement effective legislative, executive, administrative or other measures to promote:

- (a) Broad access to effective and comprehensive educational and public awareness programmes;
- (b) Public awareness about the health risks of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke;
- (c) Public access, in accordance with national law, to a wide range of information on the tobacco industry."

It is clearly stated that all Parties to the WHO FCTC should take certain measures to promote education, communication and training to raise public awareness, provide information about the health risks of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke and give the public access to information on the tobacco industry. These actions generate support for the actions and strategies undertaken by governments to protect the public and to prioritize public health over other interests.

Are education, communication and training effective?

Yes, they are. Health education, communication and training increase public awareness of tobacco control. A comprehensive approach, however, is needed in which a range of measures are taken together, but this is not the only determinant for success, also important are:

- evidence-based practices and approaches
- cultural and social suitability of messages
- multisectoral approaches adopted for the planning, identification of needs and implementation methods
- use of a wide variety of tools to address different needs and cover the largest possible population groups.

Strong legislation is important for tobacco control but as equally important is changing public opinion and social norms to ensure compliance. Neither can be achieved without implementation of well-planned and evidence-based education, communication and training programmes.

Effective partnership in tobacco control efforts

In most countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, ministries of health are the leading agencies at national level in tobacco control. However, the role of other partners, government agencies and civil society is vital in health education, communication and training to raise public awareness in tobacco control.

Whether within government or civil society, partnership is key for the success of awareness-raising campaigns and educational efforts at national level. For example, drawing on the experiences of the ministry of education, ministry of information and the services and expertise of public information agencies is important to ensure that all evidence is taken into account when planning, identifying and implementing activities.



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Further enquiries:
Tobacco Free Initiative
WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
TFI@emro.who.int
www.emro.who.int/tfi/tfi.htm

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Civil society is a central partner in raising public awareness for tobacco control. The WHO FCTC guidelines state that: *"the participation of civil society is of vital importance to national and international tobacco control efforts"*. Civil society should be engaged in all phases of planning, developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating education, communication and training programmes. Civil society groups with any affiliation to the tobacco industry should be excluded from such partnerships.

Success in tobacco control requires a comprehensive approach involving national level planning. One measure alone will not work. Demand side measures are to be implemented together with other measures for tobacco control. Education and communication will be of little value without strong legislation to support them.

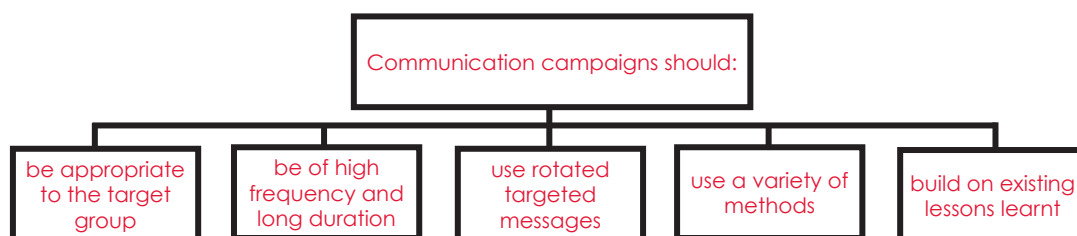
Education, communication and training in the Region

In most countries of the Region, there is no separate plan of action or strategy for education, communication and training for tobacco control. Countries are conducting activities in these three areas, but in most cases, no comprehensive strategy is being followed. Activities are usually adhoc and do not follow a multisectoral approach to tobacco control at national level. There is great potential to raise public awareness of tobacco control in many countries through proper planning for education, communication and training. Many activities are currently focused around World No Tobacco Day, as national tobacco control activities lack coordination and sustainability. When national campaigns are conducted campaign evaluations should be undertaken regularly.

Successful regional tobacco control campaigns have been conducted, such as the Makkah and Medina tobacco-free campaigns. The campaigns, launched by the former King, HRH Fahd Ben Abdelaziz, had several key elements which led to their success.

- Strong coordination mechanism.
- Strong involvement of civil society.
- Regular evaluation.
- Campaign conducted through:
 - all media to raise public awareness
 - regulations to control practices at city level
 - monitors and evaluators trained to sustain the achievements.

Pre- and post-testing of campaign material is essential for regular evaluation.



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How to implement successful tobacco control programmes?

Education, communication and public awareness is about changing social beliefs and creating an enabling environment for tobacco control. In many countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, tobacco use is still widely tolerated and people are hesitant to defend their right to a clean environment.

For successful tobacco control programmes to be implemented, an appropriate infrastructure needs to be in place, and for this, it is necessary to:

- establish coordinating mechanisms
- identify responsible agencies and the role of government versus civil society
- establish action plans for implementing education, training and communication
- ensure legitimacy and research-based activities and evidence-based action conducted
- ensure sustainability through the provision of adequate human and financial resources
- make available cost-effective logistics
- collect national data regularly and review and evaluate implementation of activities
- provide regular training to key players.

Training should be provided to all influential people who work closely with society, such as:

- physicians and health workers
- community workers
- social workers
- media professionals
- educational decision-makers
- religious leaders
- the judiciary.



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