BARRIERS IN IMPLEMENTING SMOKE-FREE LEGISLATION IN INDIA: EXPERIENCE FROM THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL

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Abstract no: 2012WCC-1654

Track 1: Prevention and early detection

BACKGROUND

- Rules on prohibition of smoking in public places notified in May 2008
- State health departments identified as nodal agency for capacity building & implementation of smoke-free policies
- State and district level Task Force formed in 2009

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate compliance and identify potential barriers in implementing smoke-free rules in West Bengal

METHODOLOGY

- Participants & period – high ranking officials of 12 selected State & Central Govt. Depts; 2009 - 2011
- Sensitization workshops by State Tobacco Control Cell & coalition of civil society organizations
- Distribution of ‘no smoking’ signage, Gazette on smoke-free legislation & guidance sheet for implementation
- Distribution of numbered booklets to OICs of city police stations for collecting penalties
- Feedback on ‘Action Plans’ for enforcement requested

RESULTS

- ‘No-smoking’ signage put up in **all 12** headquarters, but **none** in district offices
- Authorized officers for receiving complaints identified by **1** department
- ‘Action Plan’ on enforcement mechanism shared by **2** departments
- **None** penalized for violation of smoke-free rules
- Potential barriers:
  - low initiative to advocate the issue
  - limited role of law enforcers in taking action against violators
  - deficiencies in follow-up monitoring

CONCLUSION

- Lax implementation by stakeholders
- Lack of political will to take pro-active measures
- Ineffective functioning of State level Task Force-cum-Monitoring committees
- Urgent need for policy makers to recognize potential barriers for effective enforcement of smoke-free rules