



THENETWORK FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION IN PAKISTAN

Countrywide Campaign to Monitor Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship Sets Out

October 10, 2011, Islamabad: Another initiative for tobacco control “Monitoring Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship (TAPS)” in Pakistan has been launched by TheNetwork for Consumer Protection. TheNetwork will monitor advertising and promotional activities and patronization of different campaigns under the guise of corporate social responsibility by tobacco companies. Tobacco promotion and sponsorship is marginally an unattended subject by regulators in Pakistan, Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Coordinator, TheNetwork expressed while highlighting the significance of initiative on TAPS.

Monitoring of TAPS by TheNetwork is funded by Bloomberg Global Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use, implemented by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (TFK) and International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases (The Union). TheNetwork is a member of Consumer International, a UK based organisation and global voice of consumers.

Banning TAPS is recommended by Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to its parties. Article 13 of FCTC recommends parties to the treaty to introduce precautionary approach to prompt for restricting tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship to reduce the tobacco related disease burden. Pakistan is a signatory of FCTC and commits the obligations by FCTC, Nadeem Iqbal said.

TheNetwork will be setting up monitoring mechanism for TAPS in populous districts of the country in collaboration with different non-government and civil society organisations including WHO, Coalition for Tobacco Control, Intermedia, Aurat Foundation and Pakistan Medical Association. The campaign will be by allying with local press clubs, districts governments, local parliamentarians and civil society organisations in targeted districts of country.

Different countries around the globe have successfully banned tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship to reduce the health burden by tobacco use. Australia has progressively restricted tobacco advertising and promotion since 1970 and finally to Tobacco Advertising Prohibition Amendment Act 2000 which was again reviewed in 2002. The effectiveness of advertising ban is proved by the reduction of prevalence and initiation of smoking in Australia.

On the other hand, Bangladesh, the neighbouring country of Pakistan has also banned all forms of direct and indirect advertisement of tobacco products in 2005. Bangladesh adopted a unique feature in the judicial system to restrict tobacco advertising by introducing mobile courts which operates in order to quicken the enforcement mechanism to address the severity of issue.

Everyday in Pakistan, 1200 young children start smoking and most of them are hooked as a smoker for lifetime in result of tobacco advertising and promotion. Different business reports on Pakistan state that "distribution and sale of two major tobacco companies is heightened in past few years due to better point of sale "merchandising". Pakistan's tobacco control law 2002 partially bans tobacco advertisement and promotion but unfortunately the modern marketing techniques and promotional activities remain unattended. Pakistan as a signatory of FCTC needs concrete measures to comply its domestic legislation with international commitments. **End**

Islamabad: October 6, 2011: Tobacco smoking in Pakistan is estimated 36 % males and 9% females. Trends of tobacco use among young adults especially university students in Pakistan are growing high. Tobacco industry is targeting youth by adopting imaginative gimmicks to market its products inresultintg thereof approximately **1200** young children start smoking everyday and most of them are hooked as a smoker for lifetime, stated Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Coordinator TheNetwork for Consumer Protection while sharing Indicators of Effectiveness for Monitoring of Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship (TAPS) in 10 selected districts of Punjab province. Monitoring of TAPS is another tobacco control initiative of TheNetwork after successfully advocating for pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs.

Pakistan is a haven for aggressive marketing of tobacco products. Tobacco industry is advertising to drive brand awareness and brand preference among youth which remain unregulated and unchecked due to ineffective partial ban on advertising of tobacco products under the tobacco control law 2002. Tobacco industry every year spends a record amount to advertise and promote its brands and patronize different campaigns under the guise of Corporate Social Responsibility to shed the real risks to health by tobacco use. Every year in Pakistan more than 100,000 people die due to tobacco related diseases and unfortunately distribution and sale of two major tobacco companies is heightened in past few years due to better point of sale merchandising, Nadeem Iqbal quoted the reference of a report by "Euromonitor International". Growing rates of tobacco consumption in Pakistan represents a huge impact not only in terms of economic costs but it is slowly depriving the country of a healthy workforce and increasing the burden of disease in the already overburdened health sector.

TheNetwork is launching its campaign on TAPS in major districts including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Lahore, Bahawalpur and Multan to monitor the tobacco industry's tactics to advertise for brand & sale promotion. TheNetwork's campaign will lead towards advocacy for comprehensive and total ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship which is also recommended by World Health Organisation (WHO) to its member states. The Article 13 of WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) recommends parties to the treaty to introduce precautionary approach to prompt for banning advertising and promotion of tobacco products including use of communication for sale promotion, distribution of free samples, discounts, free gifts and any opportunity to participate in a promotional activity by tobacco industry.

TheNetwork along with its project partners including WHO, Coalition for Tobacco Control, Intermedia, Aurat Foundation and Pakistan Medical Association will advocate the Government of Pakistan to comply its domestic legislation for tobacco control with international commitment, FCTC which lays down the obligations to restrict tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship to reduce the tobacco related disease burden. The

recent UN summit on Non-communicable Diseases (NCD) in September 2011, has also declared tobacco use the common cause of 4 leading NCDs around the globe.

Though, Government of Pakistan has taken initiatives to partially control advertising and promotional activities of tobacco industry but it doesn't cover the modern advertising and promotional techniques and activities carried out in the name of corporate social responsibility. Neighbouring countries like India and Bangladesh have introduced stringent measures to restrict tobacco industry's campaigns for sale promotion. TheNetwork urges the government to curtail the relentless and deceptive marketing of tobacco industry.