

## WFPHA Tobacco Control Project Annual Report 2004

### Introduction

The purpose of the WFPHA Tobacco Control Project is to promote worldwide tobacco control by supporting and promoting the Framework Convention on Tobacco control (FCTC). Target groups are the national Public Health Associations, the WHO and other nongovernmental organizations.

Important objectives were already reached, when early in 2003 a Convention text was accepted by the negotiating body, which generally met the requirements of effective tobacco control, and when in May of that year, the Convention was passed unanimously by the World Health Assembly. Of the 192 member States of the WHO, 168 signed the FCTC, and the principal goal for 2004 was to obtain 40 ratifications – the number required for the Convention to be enacted.

It is a great satisfaction to report that this goal was reached by the end of November, 2004. Since then, the number of ratifying States has increased to 64, and on 27th of February 2005, the FCTC was legally enacted.

However, new challenges are waiting to be met, including by the WFPHA, and this has mainly preoccupied the WFPHA Tobacco Control Project:

- Of the 63 countries represented in the WFPHA through their national Public Health Associations, 26 are among the ratifying countries, while 37 are not and need further information and pressure from public health and tobacco control advocates.
- In many ratifying countries ratification is only the beginning of a difficult process toward implementation of effective tobacco control, and public health associations and other advocates need to see to it that this goal is reached promptly.
- In some of the ratifying countries governments have re-interpreted the requirements of the FCTC in terms of legislative changes to a point, where effective tobacco control is threatened. And
- Within the international bodies preparing for implementation of the FCTC internationally, countries with close relations to tobacco interests are trying to prevent effective models of organization and financing from being adopted.

### Activities of the WFPHA Tobacco Control Project

*Informing National Public Health Associations.* In December 2004 /January 2005 WFPHA members were informed by letter about the then upcoming meeting to organize the structures and financing of the FCTC. Members were asked to inform their Ministries of Health and negotiating delegations of the points at issue and the importance of supporting solutions permitting effective tobacco control internationally.

*Preparing für an International Health Professionals Petition in Support of the FCTC.* In April 2004, the WFPHA General Assembly passed a resolution calling for preparation of an international Health Professionals Petition. Contacts with the major international federations of health professionals (physicians, nurses, pharmacists) had already been made, but other activities and uncertainty about funding kept these partners from committing themselves firmly. In the Fall of 2004 a contact was established with UICC, the International Union Against Cancer, revealing new possibilities for conducting tobacco control petitions through the Internet, at no cost. Details are now being studied and a meeting at UICC will be held with representatives of the partner organizations on May 9. More can be said at the WFPHA General Assembly of May 16, 2005.

*Regional and National Workshops in Latin America and the Caribbean.* The Canadian Public Health Association was among the main organizers of three workshops on "Tobacco and Public Health" in the Americas taking place in April 2005 and funded by Health Canada. Several PHAs from South and Middle America and the Caribbean were represented.

*Global Health Professionals Tobacco Survey.* Earlier in 2005, WHO, in collaboration with the Canadian Public Health Association and the Centers for Disease Control (USA) conducted a survey on tobacco among 3rd year medical students in ten countries of four continents (Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, South America). As smoking among medical students is unexpectedly high in some parts of the world, repeating such studies in further countries is discussed, including whether Public Health Associations could help organize such studies.

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Theodor Abelin