

**AFTC Networking Conference June 23-25, 2010 (Mumbai)**  
**Pre-and Post-Conference Evaluation**

Member organizations of the Advocacy Forum for Tobacco Control (AFTC) met for a Networking Conference in Mumbai from June 23-25, 2010. The conference was organized by Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health. The technical content of the conference was developed by HRIDAY (AFTC Secretariat) in consultation with the Advisory Committee and member organizations. Agenda development was based on thorough needs assessment conducted by HRIDAY, in which inputs from all members were sought.

Seventy five members from 51 organizations under the umbrella of the AFTC participated in this networking conference. The main objectives of the conference were to get members to meet face to face, since in previous meetings, it was only the Regular members who got an opportunity to meet, enhancing communication and strategy planning for AFTC future activities and networking among all member organizations. Participants shared their expectations from the workshop and the coalition through a pre-conference evaluation exercise. Similarly, a post-conference evaluation exercise helped the participants to communicate their experiences of the conference and future functioning of AFTC which helps the Secretariat to be responsive to them.

### **Methodology**

Data from the pre and post-evaluation tools was entered using Microsoft Access data entry software. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and NVIVO were used for quantitative and qualitative analysis, respectively.

### **Results**

#### **PRE-CONFERENCE EVALUATION**

##### **Response Rate**

**Total no. of participants = 75**

No. of participants who were eligible for the survey = 61\*

No. of respondents = 48

Response rate = 79%

*\* **Note:** personnel from HRIDAY and Healis (seven each) who participated in the conference did not respond to the pre and post-evaluation, since they were extensively involved in conference planning and agenda development. The Advisory Committee members also abstained from responding to this evaluation.*

Frequencies may not match in tables since some respondents either did not respond to the question or selected multiple responses

## 1. Understanding about AFTC

	Frequency (n=48)*	Percentage
AFTC is a platform to provide networking among tobacco control NGOs in India	42	87.5
AFTC e-mails are very important resource for sharing and seeking information regarding contemporary tobacco control activities in India	23	47.9
AFTC helps building technical and legal tobacco control capacity among NGOs in India	23	47.9
AFTC promotes evidence based advocacy for tobacco control	21	43.8

Most of the participants felt that AFTC is a networking platform for tobacco control NGOs. Other responses described AFTC as a source for latest information on tobacco.

## 2. Benefits to organization from AFTC and its functions in the past

	Frequency (n=48)*	Percentage
Capacity building in tobacco control activities	31	64.6
Legal advice and resources	14	29.2
Helped in initiating and sustaining tobacco control activities	16	33.3
Developing partnership among the member	10	20.8

About 65% of the respondents reported that being members of AFTC was helpful in capacity building.

## 3. Present limitations of AFTC

- Most of the participants felt the need for stronger communication and better networking.
- Other limitations included lack of:
  - Regular updates
  - Opportunities to meet and act together
  - Trainings and designing IEC material
  - Lack of government partnership
- Only one organization reported that role definitions were not well documented.

Frequencies may not match in tables since some respondents either did not respond to the question or selected multiple responses

#### 4. Suggestions to strengthen AFTC functioning

- Many constructive suggestions were provided by member organizations:
  - One of the most common suggestions was having frequent meetings for the member organizations in order to develop and review the implementation of action plans.
  - Other suggestions included:
    - Discussion of problems and challenges faced at various levels.
    - Developing and strengthening of networks in rural and remote areas, apart from metropolitan cities.
    - Frequent meetings of the AFTC members with government personnel, committee members and people working at state levels to effectively implement various tobacco control policies.
    - Regularly updating the AFTC website.
- One organization reported that AFTC needs to be a more structured body, with a well defined role and well functioning Secretariat with sufficient resources.

#### 5. Is the agenda of the conference as per the needs expressed in the needs assessment?

	Frequency (n=48)*	Percentage
Yes	40	83.3
No	1	2.1
Can't say	5	10.4

83% of the participants responded that the agenda developed for the conference was according to their organization's needs (as expressed in the needs assessment exercise conducted by HRIDAY prior to the conference).

#### 6. Topics of interest that could have been included in the agenda

Member organizations shared some issues which were not a part of the agenda. The reason why these could not be incorporated was the paucity of time, since the goal of the conference was networking among members. Some of the technical issues that could not be included were:

- Tobacco cessation
- Sensitizing younger population, capacity building on developing collaborations
- Fund raising for NGOs
- Volunteerism and networking with district level officials and other organizations working in the same area.

Frequencies may not match in tables since some respondents either did not respond to the question or selected multiple responses

## 7. Interest rating of the sessions

Sessions which the participants looked forward to the most were:

	Frequency (n=48)*	Percentage
Small working group discussions (strategy planning sessions)	31	64.6
Current challenges and opportunities in tobacco control	29	60.4
Poster/ IEC Session	25	52.1
Structured panel discussion (India's progress on FCTC and COTPA)	24	50.0

## 8. Sessions which were of lesser interest to the participants

	Frequency (n=48)	Percentage
Welcome Session	9	18.8
Opening Plenary	8	16.7
Introductory session for strategy planning	19	39.6
Closing plenary	5	10.4
Discussion on AFTC press release focusing on delay in pictorial warnings	13	27.1
Plenary session Sharing and finalizing draft AFTC press release	8	16.7
Small working group presentations	20	41.7
Open discussion (Finalizing AFTC strategy and lead organization(s) on each priority area)	19	39.6
Open discussion (AFTC collaborative processes-emails, website, news sharing, feedback and follow up on collective decisions)	19	39.6

## 9. What can be the most effective outcome from this conference?

- Networking with all members and sharing of information, knowledge and technical expertise.
- Receiving updates on member activities and contribution in the field of tobacco control.
- Better understanding of tobacco control activities and strategies.
- Mutual cooperation and better coordination among the members.
- Strategy development for effective implementation of tobacco control programmes.
- Creating a streamlined mechanism of communications especially according to strategic working group i.e. smoke free, ban on advertisement, pictorial warnings etc.

Frequencies may not match in tables since some respondents either did not respond to the question or selected multiple responses

## 10. Overall expectations from the conference

Participants considered the conference as an opportunity to:

- Network and liaise with tobacco control experts and develop strong coalition for tobacco control advocacy.
- Know more about civil society efforts for tobacco control.
- Develop good need based strategies and a concrete plan of action against tobacco industry tactics.
- Strengthen the state level tobacco control programmes.
- Build capacity to work in partnership with the government.
- Building road maps for future.
- Develop technical and legal expertise for tobacco control.

## 11. Organizational profile of member organizations

	Frequency (n=48)*	Percentage
Research	14	29.2
Legal experts	6	12.5
Communication	31	64.6
Others	15	31.3

## POST-CONFERENCE EVALUATION

### Response Rate

**Total no. of participants = 75**

No. of participants who were eligible for the survey = 61\*

No. of respondents = 42

Response rate = 69%

**\*Note:** *personnel from HRIDAY and Healis (seven each) who participated in the conference did not respond to the pre and post-evaluation, since they were extensively involved in conference planning and agenda development. The Advisory Committee members also abstained from responding to this evaluation.*

Frequencies may not match in tables since some respondents either did not respond to the question or selected multiple responses

### 1. Did the agenda of the conference reflect the needs of organizations?

	Frequency (n=42)	Percentage
Yes	41	97.6
No	01	02.4

Almost 98% of the participants felt that their organization's needs were adequately addressed in the agenda.

### 2. Most effective and informative session

More than 90 % of the respondents felt that small working group discussions (action plan development) and more than 60 % felt that working group presentations were most informative and effective.

More than 80 % of the respondents also found sessions on AFTC's history and future goals and structured panel discussion on India's progress on FCTC and COTPA quite informative.

### 3. Which session(s) was most ineffective?

Less than 30 % of the respondents found plenary sessions as informative and less than 50 % of them found posters, current challenges and opportunities in tobacco control and strategy planning informative.

### 4. Rating of the strategy planning framework

	Frequency (n=42)*	Percentage
Highly informative	19	45.2
Informative	21	50.0
Somewhat informative	-	-
Not informative	-	-

### 5. Role of conference in enhancing organization's tobacco control work

Most of the participants agreed that the conference will definitely enhance their organization's work and updated them on various aspects of tobacco control. It was also helpful in terms of information sharing, networking and enhancing capacity. Planning and monitoring of the activities and sharing best practices and professional methods to reach target goal were some of the learnings from the conference.

Frequencies may not match in tables since some respondents either did not respond to the question or selected multiple responses

**6. What new knowledge did you gain about tobacco control and related issues, about which you were unaware until now?**

Mainly the role of AFTC and its activities for tobacco control, clear information on illicit trade, industry tactics, pictorial warning and taxation and AFTC is not a registered organization.

**7. Did the conference meet your expectations?**

	Frequency (n=42)*	Percentage
Yes	32	76.2
No	04	09.5

Majority of the participants mentioned that the conference was a good platform for networking and interacting with all the AFTC members who now know each other better. Participants felt more confident to influence other NGOs, educational institutions, clubs, pressure groups etc. to take up the issue of tobacco control seriously.

**8. Suggestions for future functioning of the AFTC**

Suggestions given by the participants included:

- Regular meeting with the member organizations and follow up.
- Invite some representatives from health department to explain the efforts taken by the government on smoke-free India/other tobacco control issues.
- Need to discuss best practices in tobacco control and their possible replication.
- Regular electronic communication or interaction through website.
- Effective involvement of civil society organizations in tobacco control.
- Selection of regional coordinating organizations in the AFTC network.

**9. Ratings for the process undertaken in the arrangement of the conference**

More than 90% of the participants felt that the:

- Conference was scheduled at a suitable time.
- Conference facilities and location were appropriate and satisfactory

Frequencies may not match in tables since some respondents either did not respond to the question or selected multiple responses

- Presenters responded to questions in an informative, appropriate and satisfactory manner.
- Pre-conference administration was appropriate and clear.

#### **OTHER IMPORTANT DISCUSSION POINTS DURING THE CONFERENCE**

- Discussions were held on whether AFTC should be registered as a formal entity or continue to work as an informal coalition of organizations. It was discussed in detail that registering/formalizing AFTC will hamper the smooth functioning of AFTC since individual organizations might take up their individual agenda. Member organizations unanimously endorsed to continue AFTC in its existing form, as an informal network of organizations.
- Members were satisfied with the functioning of the Secretariat and Advisory Committee.
- Members expressed the need for drafting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in order to ensure optimum use of AFTC as a coalition and the AFTC list serve. The Secretariat was requested to draft these SOPs in consultation with the Advisory Committee.
- In order to enhance AFTC functioning, it was proposed to select one Associate member from each region of the country. These organizations will be nominated by the other members in the region, after consultation, on a unanimous basis and will be included as Regular members.
- Based on participation in AFTC's tobacco control activities, the Secretariat will suggest possible names of organizations to members in each region and the Advisory Committee.
- Five strategic working groups were constituted within AFTC: (1) smoke-free public places, (2) advertising ban, (3) pictorial health warnings, (4) tobacco taxation, and (5) tobacco industry tactics.
- Tactics of the tobacco industry as a key challenge to effective tobacco control was discussed in detail.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

The AFTC Networking Conference was one of its kinds attended by a large number of organizations from all across India working in the field of tobacco control. The conference served as a platform where senior tobacco control advocates shared their experiences in the field with young tobacco control professionals bubbling with innovative ideas. Most of the sessions and discussions were appreciated by the participants and they felt it would be helpful to them in the future. The most important point stressed upon in this conference was alliance building and networking not only with member organizations but also with other civil society organizations and government to advance tobacco control activities in India. Some issues hampering tobacco control efforts were taken up with immediate effect for implementation as a result of the facts and ideas arising out of the small working group discussions. The AFTC Conference was able to garner media support for its tobacco control agenda within a short span of time.

Frequencies may not match in tables since some respondents either did not respond to the question or selected multiple responses