



Report Two Orientation Sessions With Authorized Persons

(Sukkur & Hyderabad, November 10 & 12th, 2010)

As an objective *“Raise awareness of “Authorized Persons” public servants as mentioned under sub-section as meaning to section 21 of the Pakistan Penal Code (Act XLV 1860) on responsibilities for implementation of tobacco control laws”*, Coalition for Tobacco Control – Pakistan (CTC-Pak) of SAMAR organized two orientation sessions with heads of educational institutions from Sindh province for control of tobacco use among students at Sukkur and Hyderabad cities respectively.

The purpose of these sessions were to meet and raise awareness of “Authorized Persons” from education sector that come under the definition of public servants as mentioned under section 21 of the Pakistan Penal Code (Act XLV 1860) on responsibilities for implementation of tobacco control laws.

The members of coalition in these cities; Management and Governance Networks (MAGNETS) in Sukkur and Sindh Health and Education Development Society (SHEDS) in Hyderabad provided support for organizing these orientation sessions on November 10th and 12th, respectively.

CTC-Pak provided the participants with the information on tobacco use, its kinds (smoking and smokeless), its consumption by students of both gender, related health hazards, efforts for tobacco control and role of authorize persons.

The participants were sensitized on their roles as authorized persons and how to effectively perform their duties as they are being the builders of nation’s next generation. They were informed that how smoking, including *sheesha*, and smokeless tobacco including *naswar*, *main puri*, *Gutka* and *paan* are becoming more popular among boys and girls who are consuming these products without the knowledge how their health will be affected.

The participants admitted that none of them knew that they are among the ‘Authorized Persons’ category and how they should act being one. Many of them conceded that they even did know prior to this session how harmful smokeless tobacco can be to the health.

There were 39 participants including the District Officer Education (DO) in **Sukkur City** orientation session. Other participants were Principals, Head Masters and Head Mistresses from both government and private secondary schools as well as from higher secondary schools (male and female).

The DO was thankful to the CTC-Pak for organizing such informative session in their area. He felt that he should’ve been more informed as he too comes under the ‘Authorized Persons’ being a government employee but there was no notification or information passed to his department in this regard. He stressed that there is need for such sessions and the government should be mobilized from top so they should inform their functionaries to the district and local level on priority basis as the issue of childrens’ health should not be taken lightly.



The participants agreed to perform their duties as 'Authorized Persons' and shall ensure that students are made aware of health hazards related to tobacco consumption by organizing information lectures, interactive sessions and other similar activities that will involve students on this issue. For such purposes they will contact CTC-Pak individually and / or through their District Education Office.

The participants demanded that there should be high taxes on tobacco products especially smokeless which are manufactured under filthy conditions from hazardous contents and are not taxed by the government. The government should be pro active in providing information to its district and local offices and more orientation sessions should be organized so all 'Authorized Persons' know about this epidemic and their role in curbing it.

Sukkur AP session



Hyderabad AP session



The other session in **Hyderabad city** was more of a learning experience for CTC-Pak as despite informing the participation level on behalf of government educational institutions was less than comparative to private education institution. There were a total of 21 participants of which seven were from government institutes and no representative from district education office.

The participants from the government institutions were of the view that apart from the information session, they are unable to act as "Authorized Persons" as there were no instructions provided to them in this regard from their district education office and unless instructed, they will not proceed. Though they acknowledged that the topic was important but it was the responsibility of the Government to take necessary steps in this matter.

The participants from private institutions, however, were appreciative for the information provided and were willing to replicate similar orientation sessions at their institutions with teachers, students and their parents. Some of them shared with the rest of the group that they, themselves and their female students, use such smokeless tobacco products especially 'main puri'. and did not considered them harmful to health. They added that they did not considered 'main puri' as a health hazard or tobacco product since its contents included 'beetle nut' and most of the females in those areas are in habit of consuming beetle nut chew products. Also, 'Sheesho' for them was a harmless social activity where they and their children spend some 'quality' time together.



The participants demanded to organize more such orientation sessions on smokeless tobacco, preferably in their institutions, for more information and to be provided with material that can further help them understand their role as “Authorized Persons” and the tobacco control issue. They urged the government to pass tobacco control instructions to their district offices and ban these tobacco products.

‘Society for Alternative Media and Research (SAMAR) is an advocacy based organization working on a project **“Supporting and monitoring implementation of tobacco control laws by strengthening Civil Society Organizations and supporting government authorities at sub-national levels”** under a grant approved by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK), USA. The purpose of this project is to; i) monitor the implementation of tobacco control laws and to provide technical support to the Tobacco Control Cell, Federal Ministry of Health (MoH), ii) focus on coalition building to seek support of CSOs and iii) liaison with the media to highlight the need of effective tobacco control in Pakistan.’