Coordination Meetings
Coalition for Tobacco Control – Pakistan
Quarter 01 Report Aug – Oct 2008

Society for Alternative Media and Research (**SAMAR**) and TheNetwork for Consumer Protection (**TN**) agreed to collaborate on a TN project "Policy Advocacy and Stakeholder Awareness Building for Packaging Reforms to Reduce Demand for Cigarettes in Pakistan" funded by the Bloomberg Global Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (BGI) for two years.

According to this collaboration, SAMAR through its **Coalition For Tobacco Control – Pakistan (CTC-Pak)** strive for strengthening the development and implementation of policies based on the provisions of Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (**FCTC**) through advocacy and community mobilization under the subject of "Mobilizing Civil Society and Community for Proposed Amendments through district level meetings".

According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the two organizations, CTC-Pak will convene 32 meetings in eight quarters i.e. four meetings per quarter, during the period of two years starting from August 2008 ending on July 2010.

CTC-Pak organized four meetings in the first quarter on the said theme in Rawalpindi, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur with support of coalition partners based in these districts.

These meetings were participated by key stakeholders of the community including university students, media, civil society, policy makers, social workers, health professionals including lady health workers, trade union and lawyers.

CTC-Pak briefed the status FCTC and role of Pakistan in tobacco control in light of tobacco ordinance implemented by the Government of Pakistan in 2003. The key issues focused during these meetings were to create awareness and demand for comprehensive ban on tobacco promotion and advertisements, prominent pictorial health warnings instead of text, raise in tobacco taxes and promote 100% smoke-free environment.

The participants took keen interest in the discussion and it was a mutual understanding in all of the meetings that intervention of tobacco industry is more in the rural area comparatively than in the urban area as implementation of the ordinance is not enforced at all in rural areas. The participants welcomed the suggestion of adopting pictorial health warning than the present text based warning which has a little or none influence on the community as majority of these areas are illiterate and pictorial warning will have great impact on them as they will be viewing these images frequently. Other highlighted issues were the recent statutory regulatory order (SRO) passed on allowing Designated Smoking Areas (DSAs) in the country, frequent advertisement campaigns launched by tobacco industry promoting its products in folk fairs, cultural events, concerts and in general, increased usage of tobacco in public places and government offices, underage sale of tobacco especially in immediate vicinity of educational institutes, availability of cheap brands, second hand (passive) smoke regarding females and health issues occur after consumption of these products.

The obstacles identified during the discussions were lack of awareness and effective implementation of the tobacco ordinance as well as lack of support from local government when accessed upon and unavailability of

other recreational activities.

There were unified suggestions from the participants that there is a need to act on grass root level as the industry has targeted the rural areas where literacy and awareness level is low.

The civil society should play its role more effectively especially expanding the coalition in such areas so a collective effort is made to aware community on grass root level, provide information about the hazards of tobacco consumption, reveal industry's unethical tactics and provide support to local government for effective implementation of tobacco control in the area. Orientation seminars, competitions and such activities should be designed by involving the community especially youth as they are the main target of the industry and since media plays a vital role in the lives of community, it should be adopted as a tool to create awareness.