

ABSTRACT

Introduction:

Centre for Combating Tobacco (CCT) is the tobacco observatory in Sri Lanka established under the FCTC Article 5.3. CCT has experimented several resource-efficient methods in low-resource settings. Sri Lanka, a developing lower-middle income country, reports user rates closer to 100% for smart mobile device and social media.

Objectives:

To effectively engage the public in monitoring tobacco industry interference and activities (TIIA)

Methods:

“TobaccoUnmasked HotSpots” (TU-HotSpots) mobile app, was developed and launched in two stages. The preliminary launch (May 2018) was to pilot the app for feasibility and acceptability. A community network to monitor TIIA, Community-Driven Tobacco Surveillance System (CDTSS) using an upgraded app (based on the pilot project findings) was launched in March 2019. Freely downloadable from any mobile app store, TU-HotSpots enables registered users to report TIIA under three categories: “Report a HotSpot” (geographical location of TIIA (Articles 5.3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 16), “Interference through Media” (Article 13) and “Tobacco Industry contacted me” (Article 5.3). Data is fed to the TU-HotSpots Map, a website with an interactive map and a dashboard of interactive graphs and charts after reviewing and approval by the CCT team.

Results:

Two evaluations done to explore the feasibility and acceptability revealed that 91.4% (n=54) agreed this app would be useful in tobacco control and 82.8% (n=48) stated that it would be accepted by the public. Inadequate technological knowledge and interrupted online connection were the perceived challenges for implementation. Active promotion using organized trainings among youth and field officers were the main suggestions for improvement. As at October 2019, 289 registrants reported 786 incidents; with 315 approved “Report a HotSpot” and 383 approved “Interference through Media” reports. “Tobacco Industry contacted me” category only had a one reporting.

Conclusion(s):

A mobile app coupled with an actively established community network is an effective tool to engage the public in monitoring TIIA.