

Empowering community to address the economic impact of tobacco smoking by using health promotion approach in a Selected rural village in Anuradhapura district, Sri Lanka

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Tobacco smoking is the second leading risk factor of global deaths. The economic burden caused by smoking is severe and it negatively affects individuals and communities. This study aimed to empower community members to address the economic impact caused by tobacco smoking in Illuppukanniya-North village by using the health promotion approach. The study was conducted with a group of 15 children in the age range of 8 to 16 years for seven months. As the first step, children identified boutiques where cigarettes are sold, householders which at least one family member consumes tobacco through observations and village mapping. Then determinants of tobacco consumption among villagers were identified by children. Actions were planned and implemented to address determinants while monitoring changes. Activities included, calculating the monthly expenditure on tobacco smoking by villagers, creating posters including expenditure calculations, pasting those posters in front of shops with a suggestion box, conducting informal discussions in front of shops to discourage buying and selling cigarettes, distributing informal messages related to the economic harm of smoking among villagers, initiating discussions with shop owners to stop selling cigarettes and empowering shop owners to initiate dialogue with consumers to discourage smoking. The progress of the activities was measured through suggestion box, observations, frequent discussions and with the use of indicators. Data was collected through focus group discussions and analyzed through thematic analysis. Lack of knowledge on real harm of economic burden, media influences, peer influences, company strategies, and availability were identified as determinants of tobacco consumption among villagers. Knowledge on real economic harm of tobacco among community members has improved by 85%. Three out of four shops stopped selling cigarettes and 27 houses out of 38 houses (71.05%) started saving money through reducing smoking. Health promotion is an appropriate approach, to empower rural communities to address the economic impact of tobacco smoking.

Keywords: Tobacco smoking, Community Empowerment, Health Promotion, Economic burden