

Asia Pacific Regional Meeting

The INNCO Asia Pacific Regional meeting was held from 6-8 December in Bangkok and was attended by all the organisations in the region. Attendees included India - Samrat Chowdhery, Thailand - Asa Saligupta, Philippines - Mark Czerwin P Erana, Malaysia - Azrul Hafriz, Australia - Attila Danko, New Zealand - Jan Walsh, Indonesia - Abigail Sutika as well as Judy Gibson CEO INNCO and Nancy Sutthoff Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator.

The Regional Organisations all stated a need for access to scientific evidence, the best way to approach government agencies, public health officials and their communities in their respective countries with the information to educate and inform them of harm reduced options that are available and why they are an option and the benefits of their use. There was also a need for advice and guidance on how to counter misinformation campaigns, funded by WHO FCTC in areas where they have major financial influence over governments, in the media regarding harm reduced alternatives to combustible tobacco. Lastly, and not least, it was noted that there was a need for standardisation of manufacture of equipment and e liquid in the region as there is nothing in place to protect consumers of harm reduced nicotine alternatives.

What we will do in 2018 as a consortium/region: For 2018, all the organisations agreed to work collaboratively towards a standardised “consumer bill of rights” that outlines what is expected of manufacturers of equipment/e-liquid, what is expected from consumers of retailers of harm reduced nicotine alternatives and how to better engage the community and the public at large in order to educate and inform them of their options to combustible tobacco.

1. We need to utilise our particular strengths towards each part of the work to be done and coordinate so that we are more effective and processes are not duplicated - share resources.
2. We need simple and coherent message to Government/Public Health Officials/Community that Harm Reduction is a Human Right guaranteed under WHO guidelines.
3. We need to present problems with solutions (evidence backed solutions) and think of all the impacts when promoting safer choices to combustible tobacco.

We have agreed upon the following principles to guide us in our work:

1. “What unites us is greater than what divides us”
2. Agree to regional aims and work on them locally using all knowledge available in region.
3. Think of the “long game” and not the short term fix. Find and create solutions that are future proofed.
4. Promote vaping as a moral issue, and to prevent it from being available is immoral (human rights perspective)
5. Frame the debate around sensible and responsible action across the region.