

Enhancing implementation of Article 12: a study on FCTC Parties’ support needs

BACKGROUND

Article 12 of the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), focusing on education, communication, training, and public awareness, is a cornerstone of comprehensive tobacco control. However, its implementation remains limited worldwide. According to the *WHO 2023 report on the global tobacco epidemic*, an estimated 217 million tobacco users worldwide have not recently been exposed to any anti-tobacco mass media campaign. The WHO FCTC Knowledge Hub for Public Awareness, established in 2022 and hosted by the French public health agency, aims to fill this gap by supporting FCTC Parties in implementing Article 12. This study aims to identify the barriers faced by Parties, assess their needs, and develop actionable recommendations to promote broader and more effective implementation of Article 12.

METHOD

The study was conducted in two phases:

First phase – Analysing existing data

Data provided by the WHO FCTC Secretariat (60 reports of needs assessment missions conducted from 2009 in a number of low and middle-income countries ; 2023 Global Progress Report on implementation of the FCTC)

Second phase – Conducting and analysing an online questionnaire

- Closed and open questions
- Distributed to FCTC focal points in each country
- Completed by 42 Parties out of 183, from the six WHO Regions

RESULTS

PHASE 1: REVIEW OF EXISTING DATA

According to the 2023 Global Progress Report, the major gaps encountered by Parties in implementing the FCTC are the lack of financial resources, human resources, and expertise, as well as the lack of training to improve their capacities. The Parties also face two major barriers: interference from the tobacco industry and a lack of cross-sector cooperation.

Needs assessments conducted between 2009 and 2022 jointly by the WHO FCTC Secretariat and national authorities in low and middle-income countries have shown that another major shortcoming for these Parties is the absence of a national tobacco control plan or regulation including Article 12 (32 Parties out of 60).

PHASE 2: QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE PARTIES

The analysis of the answers confirmed the previously identified shortcomings and clarified the Parties’ expectations regarding support for implementing Article 12.

Types of support

The Parties expressed strong interest in all types of resources on offer, particularly training courses, webinars and documentary resources, which were considered useful by over 90% of respondents (Figure 1).

Figure 1 | Usefulness of the types of assistance offered. Collected via the mandatory closed question “How useful do you think the following forms of assistance would be to support you in implementing Article 12?” (basis: 42 Respondents)

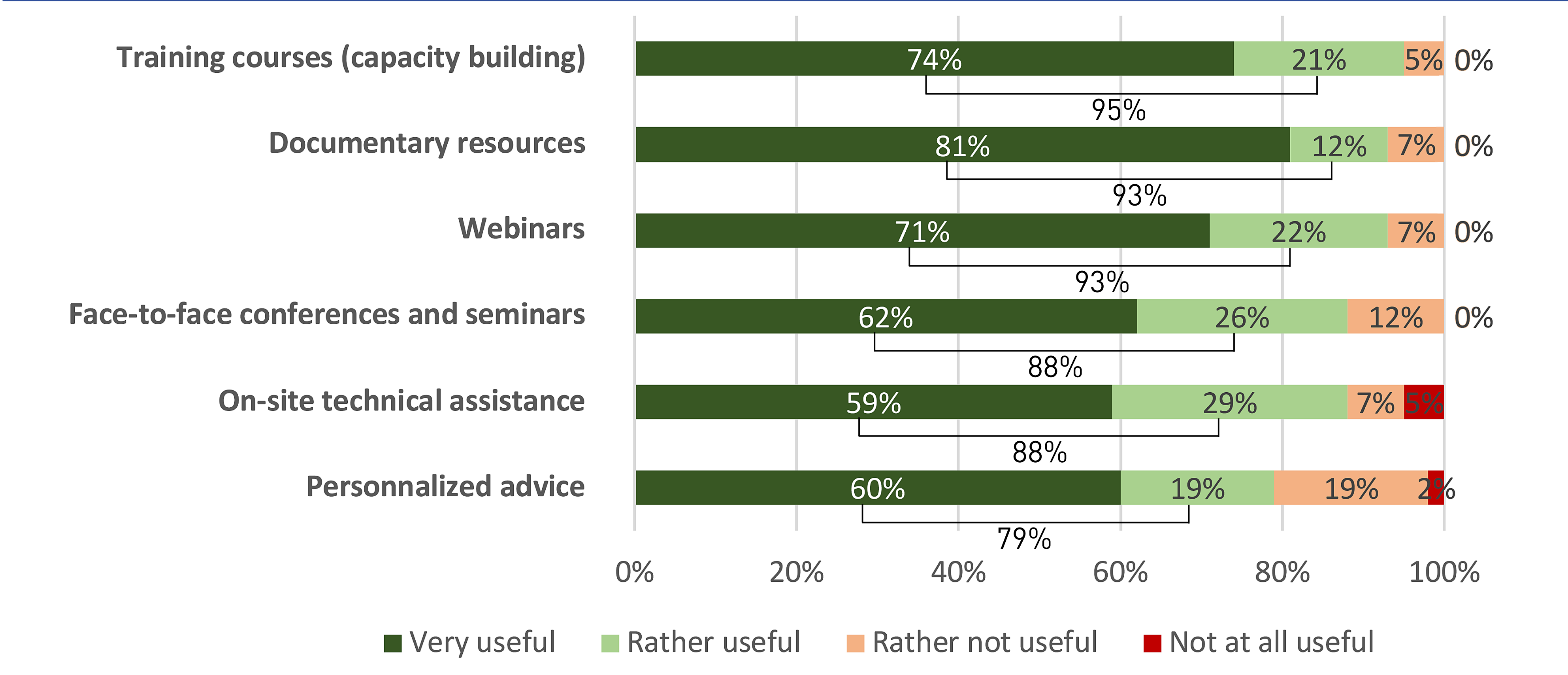
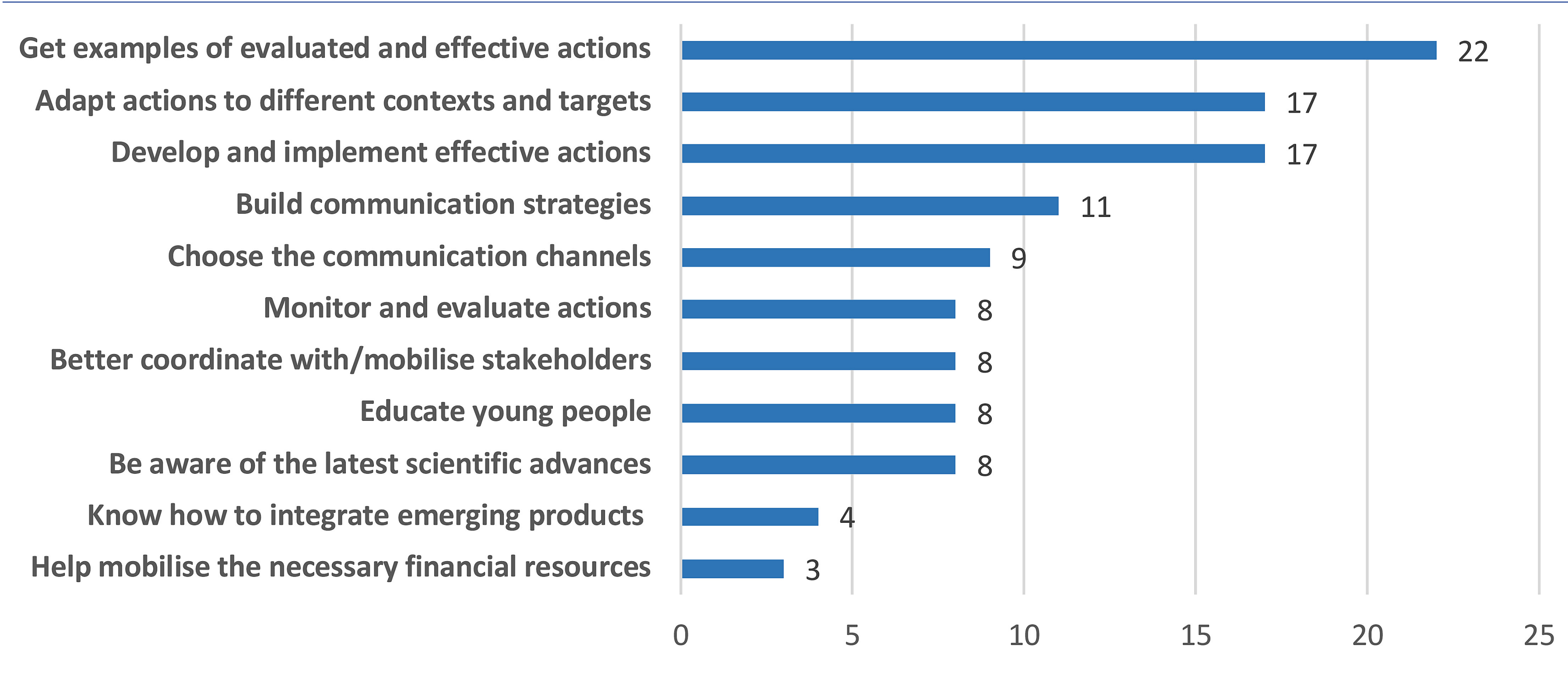


Figure 2 | Topics for which assistance is especially needed. Collected via the open non-mandatory question: “In your opinion, how should the WHO FCTC Knowledge Hub for Public Awareness (Article 12) focus its work to best assist you in implementing your education training, communication, or public awareness programmes and actions?” (basis: 39 respondents)



With regard to documentary resources, the Parties are particularly interested in accessing best practices, methodological guidelines and copyright-free material.

Profiles

Within the Parties, those most likely to seek support from the WHO FCTC Knowledge Hub for Public Awareness represent a variety of profiles, spanning both technical and political domains. Parties mainly mentioned officers responsible for health prevention and anti-smoking strategy officers in ministries and government agencies (mentioned by 30 out of 40 respondents). They also mentioned professionals from other structures involved in tobacco control, and in particular NGOs (mentioned by 19 out of 40 respondents). The Parties are therefore looking for support in successfully mobilizing all stakeholders and coordinating with them.

Priority areas

The Parties need a support primarily focused on the topics presented in Figure 2.

Analysis highlights critical gaps, particularly in legal frameworks, political commitment, technical expertise, and dedicated funding for awareness-raising initiatives. These results underline the need for support and resources to strengthen countries’ capacities in implementing Article 12. The WHO FCTC Knowledge Hub for Public Awareness is committed to continuing to offer multi-dimensional support, which will focus primarily on training, providing recent documentary resources on its website and webinars, and which will prioritize the key topics identified. A project is also underway to develop royalty-free materials targeting young people, designed to raise awareness about the tobacco industry tactics.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by Parties in implementing Article 12 of the FCTC. These results will serve as a foundation for fostering targeted actions and stronger international collaborations to support Parties in achieving their tobacco control objectives. These findings will also usefully guide the services offered by the WHO FCTC Knowledge hubs network.

REFERENCES

- WHO Report on the global tobacco epidemic. World Health Organization, 2023
- 2023 Global Progress Report on implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. World Health Organization, 2023
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- WHO FCTC Secrétariat
Santé publique France
WHO FCTC Knowledge Hub for Public Awareness