

TOBACCO CONTROL FACTSHEET

Tobacco use is the single greatest cause of preventable death worldwide.

WHY TOBACCO CONTROL IS AN IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

- Tobacco use causes nearly 6 million deaths each year, with nearly 80% in low- and middle-income countries.
- Tobacco use will account for more than 8 million deaths each year by 2030, if the tobacco epidemic continues unchecked.
- Tobacco is the only legal product that kills half of the people who use it, as well as hundreds of thousands of non-smokers.
- Tobacco use is a risk factor for six of the eight leading causes of death worldwide.
- More than 80 percent of smokers live in low- and middle-income countries.
- Public health services are under strain to cope with the increasing demands caused by tobacco use.
- In addition to suffering and death, tobacco use drags low- and middle-income countries further into poverty through lost productivity.
- Reduction of tobacco use by implementing effective tobacco control programmes serves public health, combats poverty and challenges health inequalities.

CRITICAL CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

Tobacco industry interference in policy-setting and law-makingⁱ

- The tobacco industry uses its economic power, lobbying, marketing and media campaigns to discredit scientific research and to influence governments in order to prevent tobacco control policies being developed and implemented.
- The tobacco industry invests in 'corporate social responsibility' programmes worldwide to create a positive public image.
- Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC gives governments a clear roadmap for preventing tobacco industry interference.

Raising tobacco taxes

- Increasing tax on tobacco is the most effective way to reduce tobacco consumption – it is high-impact and cost-effective.
- When used strategically, increased tobacco taxes can help cover the cost of tobacco use to a society and the extra revenue from tax can be dedicated to health promotion.
- Increasing tobacco taxes has a greater impact on consumption in low- and middle-income countries. A price rise of 10% decreases consumption by up to 8% in low- and middle-income countries, and by up to 4% in high income countries.
- Tripling tobacco taxes worldwide would reduce consumption by one third and prevent 115 million tobacco-related deaths by 2050. Most lives saved would be young men in low- and middle-income countries.

Legal challenges – trade

- The tobacco industry's economic power makes it an intimidating legal rival. Trade agreements are key areas for legal challenges between the industry and governments implementing tobacco control measures.
- International trade treaties can have an impact on tobacco control. Agreements under the World Trade Organization, free trade agreements and customs unions and international investment agreements liberalise trade amongst countries involved, but also increase the number and breadth of a country's trade obligations. Countries that are parties to international trade treaties and the WHO FCTC may find themselves having divergent legal obligations, as tobacco control measures include price and tax increases, advertising, promotion and sponsorship restrictions.

E-cigarettes and Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems [ENDS]

- E-cigarettes and ENDS safety and efficacy have not yet been scientifically proven, yet marketing, promotion and use have grown exponentially.
- Transnational tobacco companies are now a strong presence in this largely un-regulated market-place, using promotional strategies and messages similar to those used for cigarettes.
- The efficacy of e-cigarettes/ENDS as cessation aids has not yet been scientifically proven, but marketing of these products frequently make these un-substantiated health claims.
- E-cigarettes/ENDS marketing targets young people with novelty flavours and delivery devices.

SOURCES AND LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

- The Union Department of Tobacco Control
<http://www.tobaccofreeunion.org/>
- WHO FCTC
<http://www.who.int/fctc/en/>
- Tobacco Atlas
<http://www.tobaccoatlas.org/>
- WHO MPOWER
<http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/en/>
- Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use
<http://tobaccocontrolgrants.org/>
- Johns Hopkins University:
<http://www.globaltobaccocontrol.org/>
- Global Adult Tobacco Survey
<http://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/gats/en/>
- Global Tobacco Surveillance System
<http://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/en/>
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/>
- Corporate Accountability International
<http://www.stopcorporateabuse.org/campaigns/challenge-big-tobacco>

ⁱ <http://www.who.int/tobacco/en/>