

## EDITORIAL

# No to tobacco to reduce mortality

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The world celebrates ‘World No Tobacco Day’ on the 31st of May as one of its major health days. The day is earmarked for bringing to the attention of the global population tobacco’s negative effects that cause the deaths of up to 7 million people each year, 10% of which are a result of passive exposure to smoking [1].

*"A cigarette is the only consumer product which when used as directed kills its consumer." – Anonymous*

Tobacco has been known to cause mortality in more than half its users; it also adversely affects non-users exposed to second-hand smoke. It is a major risk factor for over six leading causes of death globally.

In 2009, the WHO reported tobacco smoking to be the second leading cause of global mortality after high blood pressure [2].

Jha projected a substantial increase in deaths caused by tobacco smoking

throughout the twenty-first century, with largest increase in low and middle-income countries [3]. Tobacco

attributable death is estimated to rise to 8.3 million globally by 2030 [4]. The authors of a case-control study in Bangladesh concluded that smoking causes about 25% of all deaths of men aged 25 to 69 years in Bangladesh a median loss of seven years of life per smoker [5]. In the United States, between 2005 and 2009, cigarette smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke led to at least 480,000 premature deaths annually in the United States [6] Tobacco not only harms health, but has a negative influence on economies and the environment [7,8]. The former Director General of the WHO, Dr Margaret Chan, commented that it costs the global economy more than USD 1.4 trillion annually in health care expenditures and productivity loss [1].

*"The true face of smoking is disease, death and horror - not the glamour and sophistication the pushers in the tobacco industry try to portray." — David Byrne*

Key elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to which all UN member states subscribe include implementing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by 2030 as part of the effort to reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases by one third. Three of the most important non-communicable diseases, including heart and lung diseases, cancer, and diabetes, are caused or



Credit: WHO

made worse by tobacco use [6]. Although many countries, organisations, and even individuals are subscribers to this agenda, the speed of implementation differs by country and region. People everywhere know that tobacco harms health and the environment, but in some countries tobacco production or sales contribute to the economy or tax revenue. Despite wide agreement on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by 2030, the enactment across multiple countries will be challenging [8]. Zambia and other African nations continue to face immense challenges in the fight to protect public health from the harms of tobacco. However, Zambia has made great strides in its commitment to implementing and enforcing tobacco control measures through ratification of the Framework in 2008 and, in 2013, a further declaration of intensified actions against tobacco as well as a speedy enactment of a comprehensive Tobacco Act to protect Zambian citizens against the harms of tobacco use [9].

Recently, a policy brief entitled 'Tax the smoker, save the smoker: The health and economic benefits of increased tobacco tax in Zambia' was shared with the Ministry of Health and other key ministries concerned with tobacco farming, cigarette manufacturing and use, and their effects on human beings and the environment. The author, Ms Moraes, describes Zambia's growing concern over the steady increase in cigarette consumption fuelled by adolescent smoking. The reduction of presumptive tax from 24% in 2008 to 27% in 2012 has increased affordability and in turn smoking habits. In 2015, independent tobacco farmers requested further reforms in tobacco tax policy by reducing presumptive tax [10]. In this policy brief, Ms. Moraes recommends increasing taxes as a proven-effective means of reducing smoking and generating revenue. A local leader, Chief Siachitema of Kalomo, echoes the suggested recommendation on increased tax as a solution to avert tobacco smoking. He also suggested stiff measures to manage the increasing,

hazardous habit. Much progress has been made globally and in Zambia; we should all feel encouraged to continue fighting this scourge through effective policies. Our 5th issue also publishes a case report on Depressive Disorder in Child Psychiatric Practice. Depression in Children though frequently unrecognized or easily dispelled as a bad mood is common among children. The paper describes a case of major depressive disorder (MDD) comorbid with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in a 13-year old and discusses treatment options while emphasizing the need for the medical fraternity to take this scenario seriously and find solutions urgently.

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