

## 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 more than 7 million deaths each year, the majority in low- and middle-income countries.
- Tobacco is the only legal product that kills half of the people who use it, as well as hundreds of thousands of non-smokers.
- Nearly 80 percent of the world's more than one billion 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-making

- 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 percent decreases consumption by up to 8 percent in low- and middle-income countries, and by 4 percent in high income countries.
- Just 32 countries have introduced tobacco tax policies that meet WHO recommended standards where more than 75 percent of the retail price is tax, covering only 10% of the global population.

### **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] and Heat Not Burn [HNB]**

- E-cigarettes, ENDS and HNB 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/HNB marketing targets young people with novelty flavours and delivery devices.
- The tobacco industry is making bold efforts to enter public health debate and policymaking discussions globally as credible stakeholders for 'harm reduction' through sales of these products.

## **WHAT THE UNION IS DOING**

### **Technical support for WHO FCTC / MPOWER implementation**

In 2005 the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control [WHO FCTC] came into force, the first and only global health treaty. This was followed by the release of the WHO's MPOWER tobacco control strategy. Parties to the treaty commit to implement the measures stipulated in the WHO FCTC and MPOWER. The Union works with governments and civil society around the world offering them technical advice and support to develop and implement these tobacco control policies.

There are now 180 Parties to the treaty. <http://www.who.int/fctc/en/>

### **Bloomberg Initiative**

The Union is a partner within the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use [BI]. The Union co-manages a grants scheme with the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids to support tobacco control projects around the globe. BI grants provide funds for governments and NGOs to develop and implement effective interventions to reduce tobacco use.

<https://tobaccocontrolgrants.org/>

### **Priority countries**

The Union focuses on 10 priority countries, with low- and middle-income, where the burden of tobacco use is highest: China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam, Mexico, Philippines, Brazil and Ukraine.

### **Smoke-free policies**

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke; therefore well-enforced smoke-free policies are essential. Since its inception in 2007, The Union's tobacco control department has supported 35 countries to adopt or strengthen smoke-free legislation.

### **Graphic health warnings**

Effective health warnings encourage tobacco users to quit and discourage others from starting. The Union works with governments and non-governmental organisations to legislate for health warnings of specified size, content and design for maximum impact. Since 2007, The Union has supported 29 countries to adopt or strengthen graphic health warning legislation.

### **Bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship [TAPS]**

Tobacco advertising is proven to increase consumption. The Union provides training to counter industry advertising tactics and supports legislation imposing bans on all forms of tobacco promotion, from point-of-sale displays to sponsorship. Since 2007, The Union has supported 27 countries to adopt or strengthen TAPS legislation.

### **Taxation**

Increasing the price of tobacco through taxation is the single most effective way to reduce tobacco consumption [see above]. Since 2007 The Union has supported 15 countries to adopt or strengthen policies to raise tobacco taxes.

### **Sustainability**

Union experts developed an innovative tool to help countries assess the sustainability of their national tobacco control programmes, identifying the policies, structures and resources it has in place for sustainable tobacco control. The [Index of Tobacco Control Sustainability](#) gives those leading national tobacco control programmes a clear baseline from which to prioritise work – it identifies gaps as well as areas of strength.

### **Conferences**

Union tobacco control experts from around the globe attend and contribute to the Union World Conference on Lung Health each year [www.worldlunghealth.org](http://www.worldlunghealth.org). The Union is also permanent secretariat for the World Conference on Tobacco or Health, which will next be held in Cape Town in 2018 <http://wctoh.org/>.

### **Journals**

The Union publishes two peer-reviewed journals, *International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease* and *Public Health Action*. The Union's tobacco control experts have new research published throughout the year. [www.theunion.org](http://www.theunion.org)

### **Technical guides and publications**

Practical guides on implementation of tobacco control measures are being published and updated frequently. [www.tobaccofreeunion.org](http://www.tobaccofreeunion.org)

## UNION EXPERTS TO CONTACT

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## SOURCES AND LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

- 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
- <https://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/>
- Corporate Accountability International  
<http://www.stopcorporateabuse.org/campaigns/challenge-big-tobacco>