



Turning Shortcomings Into Opportunities

Closing Tobacco Control Policy Gaps to Save Lives and Reduce Economic and Environmental Damage

As in all parts of the world, tobacco use takes a terrible toll on the health, economies, and environments across the WHO African region. The bad news is that the WHO’s recent report on the global epidemic finds the African region falling woefully short on passing evidenced-based policies to address tobacco use. The good news is this provides an opportunity to prevent and reduce tobacco use and its impact on non-communicable disease and death, economic costs, and environmental damage.

All countries in the region should act now to adopt these life- and cost-saving policies. It will take the efforts of everyone with a stake in the health, environmental, and economic well-being of the region to make it happen in the face of continued tobacco company opposition (remember: they also know these policies work).

Comprehensive Smoke-Free Laws

not only protect everyone from the harms of secondhand smoke—saving lives, healthcare costs, and costs to business—they also encourage and help smokers quit and discourage youth from starting. However, just **14 of the 47 (30%)** of African Region countries have adopted smoke-free laws at WHO’s highest level, compared to 44% of countries in the rest of the world (65/148).

30%



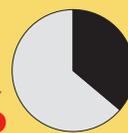
African Region countries that have adopted smoke-free laws at WHO’s highest level

44%



Other countries that have adopted smoke-free laws at WHO’s highest level

38%



Other countries that have reached the highest level of taxation



Increasing tobacco taxes

is one of the most effective ways to reduce tobacco use but one of the least utilized by countries in the African region.

Higher tobacco taxes also produce critical in-country revenue that can fund important health and other issues to improve the economy, especially in these times of shrinking global aid.

Sadly, **just 1** country in the African region has reached the highest level of taxation recommended by the WHO, compared to 26% (38 countries) in the rest of the world.



Large Graphic Health Warnings

are a cost-effective way to encourage and help tobacco users beat their deadly addiction by increasing awareness of the health harms of tobacco use, as well as to discourage youth initiation. Still, just **17 of the 47 (36%)** African Region countries have adopted this measure, compared with 63% in the rest of the world.

Graphic Health Warnings work best when combined with programmatic efforts like mass media campaigns that encourage and direct users to cessation and help for smokers in their quitting efforts programmatic efforts like media campaigns and help such as counseling and medications fort tobacco users who are encouraged to quit.

Hardly any African Region countries conduct mass media campaigns (7 countries) or provide cessation assistance (3 countries) at the highest WHO level.

Tobacco Advertising, Promotion, and Sponsorship

bans are critical to stopping the tobacco companies from continuing to wage aggressive marketing campaigns that target kids and other vulnerable populations, such as those living in poverty, with their deadly products.

While the African Region has performed better on this measure, **less than half (22/47 or 47%)** of the African region countries have adopted comprehensive restrictions to protect their citizens from tobacco marketing; 31% (36/148) of other countries have adopted these policies.

Each of these policies alone works to reduce tobacco use, but when combined in a comprehensive approach, they work synergistically to create social and cultural norms that make tobacco use more likely to be rejected at a population level.

The resulting declines in use will impact the tobacco epidemic, thereby reducing disease and death, saving untold health care and lost productivity dollars, raising needed revenue for critical programs, and stopping the damage that tobacco growing, manufacturing, and disposal/litter exact on the environment.



36%
African Region countries that have adopted large graphic warnings



63%
Other countries that have adopted large graphic warnings



47%
African Region countries that have adopted comprehensive restrictions to protect their citizens from tobacco marketing



31%
Other countries that have comprehensive restrictions to protect their citizens from tobacco marketing