



Policy brief on tobacco control for parliamentarians

Overview:

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the world today. Tobacco related illnesses kill 5.4 million people a year. If current patterns persist, smoking will kill more than 8 million a year by 2030, of which more than 80 per cent fatalities in low- and middle-income countries.

Growing tobacco use remains the biggest public health challenges facing the developing world. This is starkly manifest in Pakistan, where an estimated 40% males and 9% females are smokers - with smoking rates going up on daily basis. One authoritative estimate puts the number of tobacco-related deaths at 100,000 per year. This means 273 tobacco deaths a day. These are worrying statistics for public health officials, policy makers and general consumers alike.

International Obligations for the Government of Pakistan

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control:

Internationally, Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (henceforth FCTC) framed by the World Health Organization ties signatory countries to its articles and guidelines into domestic legislation. FCTC is a public health treaty, which became international law in February 2005. The government of Pakistan signed and ratified FCTC in 2004. This came after a national tobacco control law in 2002.

The WHO-Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) has been signed by 168 of the 192 states and become parties to this historic international treaty which aims at reducing and controlling tobacco-related deaths and diseases in the world.

Main Provisions in FCTC:

Right from the first preamble paragraph which states that "Parties to this Convention are determined to give priority to their right to protect public health", the FCTC is a global trend setter.

A. Demand Reduction provision of FCTC: (Articles 6 - 14)

- Price and tax measures to reduce demand for tobacco plus prohibition or

Article 11: Pictorial Health Warnings legislation to reduce tobacco use: key provision of the FCTC

Article 11 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) states that warning labels should cover at least 50 percent of the principal display areas of the package (i.e. both the front and back). It also requires that the messages be rotated and encourages the use of pictures and pictograms.

Article 11 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), dealing with package health warnings and labelling, contains key obligations. Effective package warnings increase awareness of the health effects of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke, and decrease consumption. Deceptive labelling by the tobacco industry undermines public health objectives.



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