## Tobacco Control and its Role in Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals

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<td>1 No poverty</td>
<td>Tobacco use leads to chronic diseases that are costly to treat, and premature deaths that cause financial burdens on families. Tobacco addiction depletes meager family income of the poorest households. Tobacco companies set a low price for poor farmers and their contract growing deals keep farmers in a debt cycle. Tobacco impoverishes governments due to the enormous financial burden it incurs with respect to health care costs, lost productivity, and environmental damage, among others.</td>
<td>Tobacco control contributes to poverty alleviation efforts. Tobacco control measures (ban on advertising, smoke free places, higher tobacco taxes, etc.) will reduce tobacco use and spending on the vice and healthcare; and instead, allow income to be redirected towards necessities like food, education, and other investments that could lift the poor out of poverty.</td>
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<td>2 Zero hunger</td>
<td>Tobacco use causes hunger and food insecurity, as spending on food is diverted to tobacco products. Studies have shown that in low-income households, spending on tobacco products often represent more than 10% of household expenditure, taking away income for necessities like food. 2013 data shows that a Sri Lankan could purchase 83 servings of rice and 65 slices of bread for the price of just one average pack of cigarettes. On the other hand, food insecurity has also been found to be a risk factor for smoking, as people cope with financial stress. On the production side, tobacco cultivation eats up large areas of land which could otherwise be used for food production. Tobacco is one of the major causes of soil and land degradation, stripping the soil of nutrients faster than other crops, contributing further to food insecurity as the land becomes unsuitable or less productive for purposes of growing food crops.</td>
<td>Reducing tobacco use can redirect spending to ease hunger (food and nutrition), from tobacco products and health costs for tobacco-related illnesses. Food assistance and tobacco reduction programs are mutually beneficial. Further, land used for tobacco production can be shifted to the growing of food crops with support from the government as mandated under the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).</td>
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<td>3 Good health and wellbeing</td>
<td>Tobacco use causes death, disability and disease. Tobacco kills over 8 million people every year, costs the world economy nearly 2% of its gross domestic product, and strips land and soil of their viability.</td>
<td>One of the SDG targets is strengthening the implementation of WHO FCTC, a treaty which sets forth measures proven to be effective in reducing tobacco consumption. If nothing is done, 1 billion people could die from tobacco-related diseases in this century.</td>
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<td>4 Quality education</td>
<td>Tobacco products are addictive. More is spent on tobacco than on education in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Tobacco use results in children being forced to drop out of school to take care of a sick relative or to find work to make up for lost wages. Many children, about 1.3 million children (14 and under) globally, are out of school as they work in tobacco fields. Studies have also shown that smoking among adolescents and exposure to second-hand smoke leads to learning problems/cognitive impairment.</td>
<td>Tobacco control keeps children in school. Money can be used for the education of children, rather than on tobacco addiction or tobacco-related diseases. Without tobacco, families can better afford to keep kids in school. Reduced tobacco production means that more children are not kept from school to work in tobacco fields. Reducing adolescent smoking reduces the risks of learning disabilities and of cognitive impairment later in life.</td>
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<td><strong>Gender equality[^24]</strong></td>
<td>Tobacco use has been rising among women, as women have been specifically targeted by the tobacco industry.[^29] In certain countries, there are already more women or girls smoking than boys or men.[^36] Women face gender-specific health risks from tobacco, such as the disproportionate burden in exposure to second-hand smoke and use during pregnancy.[^37] Globally, second-hand smoke accounted for 886,000 deaths in 2015.[^38]</td>
<td>Tobacco control measures can stop the rise in tobacco use among women and girls, and reduce problems associated with second-hand smoke exposure. The WHO FCTC requires parties to undertake measures which address gender-specific risks under Article 4.2(d).</td>
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<td><strong>Clean water &amp; sanitation[^39]</strong></td>
<td>Both tobacco consumption and production cause water pollution. Cigarette butts are the most widely littered product globally, often dumped into oceans, lakes and other water sources.[^40] Toxics substances from discarded butts, like arsenic, lead, nicotine and ethyl phenol are leached into aquatic environments and the soil, with implications for the quality of drinking water. Even unsmoked filters are toxic to water and life below it.[^41] Tobacco growing is water-intensive and disperses chemicals into nearby waterways,[^42] contaminating even deep groundwater.[^43]</td>
<td>Tobacco control provides a comprehensive approach to achieving the goal of having clean water and sanitation.[^44] The reduction in tobacco use will result in less littered cigarette butts, and less chemical contamination of waterways.</td>
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<td><strong>Decent work &amp; economic growth[^46]</strong></td>
<td>The cost of tobacco use to the global economy is estimated to be nearly USD $2 trillion (in 2016 purchasing power parity) per year, equivalent to approximately 2% of the global gross domestic product (GDP),[^46] arising from lost productivity[^47] and healthcare-related expenses[^48] due to tobacco-related illnesses, as well as premature deaths, many of which occur during prime productive years.[^49] This does not yet take into account other substantial costs, such as “the costs caused by second-hand smoke,”[^50] non-combustible tobacco products, the environmental and health damages from tobacco farming, smoking-related fire hazards, cigarette butt littering, and foremost, the immeasurable pain and suffering of tobacco victims and their families.[^51] In terms of tobacco production, tobacco farmers are often trapped in a cycle of indebtedness towards the tobacco industry, as they are exploited and forced to sell tobacco leaves at fixed low prices.[^52] Tobacco farming uses child labor, taking children away from school.[^53] Tobacco growers are moreover exposed to the health risk posed by “green tobacco illness” due to nicotine toxicity in handling tobacco leaves.[^54]</td>
<td>According to a 2017 UNDP report, tobacco control can help avoid losses to productivity and GDP which result from “premature mortality, sick leave and unwell workers who remain on the job but perform below capacity.”[^55] Tobacco control would also advance better and safer working conditions, as workplaces become smoke-free spaces.[^56] Tobacco control also supports families to shift from tobacco growing, and the “debt-bonded and child labor it often entails,” to alternative economic activities which can be more lucrative and do not harm growers’ health.[^57]</td>
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<td><strong>Industry, innovation &amp; infrastructure[^58]</strong></td>
<td>The tobacco industry uses research to produce new or more addictive products and market them more effectively, and most countries do not have the technology, expertise and regulation in place to keep up. The industry takes advantage of new infrastructure, including in information and communications technology, adapting to new media platforms, including social media, in order to reach a wider audience and attract new users to replenish its dying customers, while those involved tobacco control fall further behind.[^59]</td>
<td>Effective tobacco control measures require quality and up-to-date research, and the ability to harness innovations in technology, by adapting to new platforms (e.g. social media) and disciplines (e.g. behavioral science) in order “to raise awareness, support cessation and unmask tobacco industry tactics.”[^60] Strengthened implementation of tobacco control will ensure the continued ability to respond to tobacco industry innovations in terms of product design and marketing strategies.</td>
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### Stopping Tobacco Organizations & Products

#### Sustainable Development Goal

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<td>10 Reduced inequalities</td>
<td>Research shows that tobacco use widens inequality. In most countries, tobacco use is highest among the poor, those with low literacy rates and those with a mental health condition.</td>
<td>Tobacco control can close gaps in inequality. Tobacco taxes are proven to reduce consumption, most among the poor, thereby reducing inequalities in smoking and its impacts, especially when revenues from taxes are reinvested into disadvantaged communities. Reducing tobacco use through effective tobacco control measures as provided in the WHO FCTC will improve health and increase opportunities in education and labor, among others, which can further reduce inequalities.</td>
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<td>11 Sustainable cities &amp; communities</td>
<td>Tobacco smoke lowers air quality, compromising the safety of housing, workplaces, transport systems and public spaces. Conditions are worse in slums, where smoking prevalence is significantly higher, compared to other regions. Globally, 570,000 children under five die each year from respiratory infections, such as pneumonia, that are attributable to indoor and outdoor air pollution and second-hand smoke.</td>
<td>Tobacco control helps produce safe and sustainable cities and communities by reducing pollution from second-hand smoke and disposed cigarette butts. The experience of Mexico City when it implemented a smoke-free law covering restaurants, bars and night-clubs in 2008 shows that smoke-free policies would not harm business, and may even have a positive impact on restaurants’ income, employees’ wages and levels of employment. Further, tobacco taxes as mandated by the WHO FCTC can provide additional, sustainable sources of funding for health care and other social causes.</td>
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<td>12 Responsible consumption &amp; production</td>
<td>Tobacco consumption generates tons of waste and releases thousands of chemicals into the planet’s air, water and soil. Cigarette butts are the most discarded waste item worldwide, amounting to 1.69 billion pounds of toxic trash each year. Indoor Particulate Matter (PM) concentrations from smoking have been found to be up to 10-fold higher than PM concentrations from diesel car exhaust. Smokers are at higher risk of dying from cardiovascular disease and lung cancer, because air pollution “combines synergistically with cigarette smoking for mortality.”</td>
<td>Tobacco control can enhance responsible consumption and production by reducing tobacco use and its resultant waste. Tobacco control “encourages countries and individual farmers to shift from tobacco production toward activities that are friendlier to people and planet, while supporting tobacco users to quit or reduce consumption and non-users to never start.”</td>
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<td>13 Climate action</td>
<td>Tobacco production, including growing and curing, causes “aggressive” deforestation, more significantly in LMICs. Tobacco farming causes up to 5% global deforestation and almost 1/5 of China’s deforestation based on a 1999 analysis. It has been found that tobacco growing “may be up to 10 times more aggressive” than all other factors in deforestation combined. Combined with tobacco consumption, the tobacco industry contributes to increased greenhouse gas emissions (e.g. carbon dioxide and methane), global warming and changes in rainfall, and irreversible biodiversity loss. Evidence suggests that, since the 1950s, tobacco along with oil companies have tried “to obscure the negative impacts of their respective industries on health and the environment,” employing the same public relations firms, research institutions and researchers for such purpose.</td>
<td>Tobacco control and climate action are mutually reinforcing. The WHO FCTC calls for the protection of the environment in addition to human health. Its implementation can help in raising awareness and provide solutions to climate change, as measures like the support for alternative economic livelihoods for tobacco growers and tobacco cessation can help tackle the problem of climate change. Implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change can also support tobacco control, as its mandate on the management, enhancement and conservation of biomass, forests, oceans and other ecosystems would benefit from considering tobacco and its environmental impacts.</td>
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<td>14 Life below water$^{97}$</td>
<td>Tobacco is a major cause of marine pollution and toxicity, causing harm to aquatic life. Trillions of cigarette butts are littered each year.$^{98}$ It was the most common single debris item collected representing 15% of the total debris collected worldwide during an international coastal clean-up in 2015.$^{99}$ Cigarette butts and filters are composed of plastic ingredients which are harmful to beaches and oceans,$^{100}$ and toxic substances (i.e. arsenic, lead, nicotine and ethyl phenol) which leach into aquatic environments and harm aquatic life, including marine and freshwater fish.$^{101}$ Tobacco production also contributes to water pollution. Pesticides and agrochemical residues from tobacco growing pollute nearby waterways, jeopardizing not only clean water for human use (SDG 6), but also the welfare of aquatic organisms.$^{102}$</td>
<td>Tobacco control can reduce water pollution and improve aquatic life. The WHO FCTC provides a means by which to reduce tobacco production and use, which will help reduce water pollution and protect life under water.$^{103}$</td>
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<td>15 Life on land$^{104}$</td>
<td>Tobacco is one of the major causes of deforestation$^{105}$ and soil and land degradation,$^{106}$ affecting life on land and reducing biodiversity. Tobacco farming is land-intensive, and uses large amounts of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators, and wood for flue-curing.$^{107}$ Tobacco crops themselves strip the soil of nutrients, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, to a greater extent and faster than other major food and cash crops.$^{108}$ Clearing land for tobacco growing, and tobacco-related forest fires, lead to deforestation and soil and land degradation.$^{109}$ In countries like Canada, cigarettes are responsible for some of the most destructive forest fires in history.$^{110}$ Tobacco-related environmental problems identified in the 1990s, including soil erosion, changing of local streams from permanent to seasonal, water pollution and deforestation were found to be still visible in 2009.$^{111}$</td>
<td>“Tobacco control can improve life on land.”$^{112}$ Reducing tobacco production and consumption will reduce and prevent further environmental damage they would otherwise cause. Tobacco control measures, like supporting economic alternatives to tobacco growing under Article 17 of the WHO FCTC, contribute to the reduction of tobacco production and use, which will in turn, contribute to the protection of land resources and help restore biodiversity, and thereby, improve life on land.$^{113}$</td>
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<td>16 Peace, justice &amp; strong institutions$^{104}$</td>
<td>Tobacco industry interference weakens institutions and the rule of law. Evidence has shown that the tobacco industry interferes with policy making, by aggressively lobbying and hijacking the legislative process to ensure that public health policies that may be adopted are weaker and geared towards its private interests. Tobacco involvement in bribing policymakers has been documented in several countries in Africa and Asia.$^{114}$ Once legislation is passed, the tobacco industry undertakes effort to weaken, delay or completely frustrate their implementation, through litigation against governments or outright circumvention of its provisions.$^{115}$</td>
<td>Tobacco control promotes good governance and strong institutions. The WHO FCTC mandates the development and implementation of comprehensive multisectoral national tobacco control strategies, and coordinating mechanisms.$^{116}$ Implementation of the WHO FCTC can thus promote other governance objectives, by enhancing capacities for intersectoral engagement and conflict of interest management, promoting greater transparency and accountability, reducing corruption and placing stronger protection against undue interference in policy making, and progress in combating organized crime (with respect to illicit trade of tobacco products).$^{117}$ “Tobacco control has already shown to be a concrete entry point for strengthening the legislative and oversight capacities of lawmakers and parliamentarians.”$^{118}$</td>
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The tobacco industry seeks partnerships with governments and institutions in order to promote its commercial interests. Tobacco industry partnerships with government and other institutions form part of its public relations strategy, designed to enhance their image, by lending them credibility and legitimacy, and thereby sending a deceptive message that their products are safe and benign. The tobacco industry uses partnerships with government and other institutions, including through so-called corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributions and activities, to gain access to high-level officials, which allows them to help in crafting policies that are in line with their commercial interests, including the provision of tax exemptions and delaying enforcement of tobacco control policies, among others.

Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC provides that parties must protect public health policies from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry. The guidelines for implementation of Article 5.3 lay down specific measures to ensure compliance with the foregoing obligation, including the rejection of partnerships and other agreements with the tobacco industry. Full compliance with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC ensures transparency and that policies adopted and implemented are in line with the standards provided in the treaty.

References
2 NO POVERTY – End poverty in all its forms everywhere
5 Ibid.
6 World Health Organization, Tobacco Free Initiative. Poverty. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/tobacco/research/economics/rational/poverty/en/ (accessed on 09 August 2019). World Health Organization. Tobacco and Poverty: A Vicious Circle. 2004. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/tobacco/communications/events/wntd/2004/en/wntd2004_brochure_en.pdf?ua=1 (accessed on 09 August 2019). World Health Organization, Tobacco Free Initiative. Tobacco: The tobacco industry uses partnerships with governments and other institutions in order to promote its commercial interests. Tobacco industry partnerships with government and other institutions form part of its public relations strategy, designed to enhance their image, by lending them credibility and legitimacy, and thereby sending a deceptive message that their products are safe and benign. The tobacco industry uses partnerships with government and other institutions, including through so-called corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributions and activities, to gain access to high-level officials, which allows them to help in crafting policies that are in line with their commercial interests, including the provision of tax exemptions and delaying enforcement of tobacco control policies, among others.

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See SDG 15 for further details on how tobacco production affects land.


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45 Decent Work and Economic Growth – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all


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74 Responsible Consumption and Production – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns


81 Climate Action – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts


84 Geist, HJ, and Lambin, EF. Proximate causes and underlying driving forces of tropi-
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WHO FCTC, Article 18


WHO FCTC, Article 17

WHO FCTC, Article 14


UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Article 4d)


Life Below Water – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

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5. Ibid.

6. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels


9. Ibid.


12. Partnerships for the Goals – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development
