

## **Human Rights Dimension of Tobacco Control, a Tool to Advance the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) implementation**

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### **Introduction**

The WHO FCTC is an evidence-based treaty that reiterates our right of all to the best standard of health. There are at least three international human rights instruments - the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child - is included in the Preamble and are the spirit of the WHO FCTC in favor of Human Rights dimension of Tobacco Control. This can be helpful to drive the tobacco control agenda.

It is reported that tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke kills more than 7 million people each year globally. If the use of smokeless tobacco is included the death is much more. WHO FCTC is not only to check the negative effects of tobacco on health right to life, but also to protect the very human right to life.

As discussed in eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP), the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC recognizes the importance of utilizing the human rights fora to combat the Tobacco Epidemic. It is recognized that there is a need to check the influence of Tobacco Industry in influencing the public health interests.

In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) all targets are closely interrelated and seek to realize the human rights of all, so all the stakeholders need to work in unison.

Following are the environmental and health concerns at each of these stages leading to Human rights violations in tobacco use in four stages of its life cycle:

- (i) It's growing and curing:
  - a. Health effects: Farmers and laborers are at risk of nicotine toxicity (Green Tobacco Sickness).
  - b. Damage to the environment:
    - i. Deforestation, soil depletion, loss of soil nutrients.

- ii. Pollution due to the heavy use of agrochemicals.
- c. Socio-economic issues:
  - i. Widespread concerns about unfair labor practices and human rights violations.
  - ii. Safety of farm workers, especially child laborer's, minorities and migrant workers.
- (ii) Its manufacturing and distribution
  - a. For cigarette production alone tobacco factories Produce and deposits tons of solid wastes, nicotine waste, chemical wastes, and other toxic by-products including ammonia, hydrochloric acid, toluene and methyl ethyl ketone.
- (iii) Its consumption:
  - a. Health effects:
    - i. Direct and second-hand smoke (SHS) health effects on the consumer includes lung cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and pulmonary diseases.
  - b. Environmental Effects:
    - i. There is an estimated loss of about nine million trees to produce three trillion matches.
    - ii. There are also Environmental impacts of manufacturing and disposing of the plastic and metal etc. used for making lighters.
    - iii. Tobacco smoking leads directly to the emission of 2 600 000 tons of carbon dioxide and about 5 200 000 tons of methane.
  - c. Fires and resulting deaths:
    - i. World over Cigarettes caused a substantial number of fires making them the single most important cause of deaths related to fires and loss of millions of dollars due to direct property damage.
- (iv) Its post-consumption waste: Tobacco product wastes (TPW) from the above products are the most common items picked up in cleanups:
  - a. Cigarette: Cigarette butts/filters: Cellulose acetate.
  - b. Bidi: Bidi Ends, unburned bidi and their wrappers and pouches.
  - c. Smokeless tobacco: Plastic packaging material-retail and wholesale pouches.
  - d. E-Cigarette Waste: E-cig pods, empty nicotine cartridges, metal or steel body, battery, and electronic material.

The environmental and health impacts of tobacco agriculture, cigarette manufacture and consumption; Bulletin of the World Health Organization 2015;93:877-880. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2471/BLT.15.152744>.

## **Recommendations**

In view of the above observations and in the interest of justice all Governments must direct the Department of Commerce, Department of Finance to take measures to discontinue conflicting policies of the Government in supporting tobacco industry interest through part-

nership, investment and grant of subsidies and also direct the Department of Health, to frame a comprehensive inter-department policy for eradication of tobacco growing, manufacture, trade, sale and use with a timeline so that the Human Rights of the users of tobacco, all affected by secondhand smoking and the public in general are not violated.

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