

# Africa Faces a Severe Health Threat from Increasing Smoking Epidemic According to New American Cancer Society Report

ATLANTA – Nov. 11, 2013 – Without intervention, an alarming rise in tobacco use is on the horizon for Africa over the next century, according to a new report from the American Cancer Society. The ***Tobacco Use in Africa: Tobacco Control Through Prevention*** report for the first time combines African smoking rates, cigarette consumption, population projections, and forecasts into one report and makes a number of recommendations aimed at curbing smoking prevalence in Africa.

While many African countries have low smoking prevalence, the American Cancer Society forecasts a significant increase in the near future. According the Africa Tobacco Report, the number of adult smokers in Africa is expected to balloon from 77 million to 572 million smokers by 2100 if new policies are not implemented and enforced.

“Africa is on a trajectory of needless tobacco-related death and disease,” said John R. Seffrin, PhD, Chief Executive Officer of the American Cancer Society. “But there is a clear opportunity to curb and prevent tobacco use and save millions of lives with a combination of targeted prevention and intervention policies. With appropriate intervention, we could avert an estimated 139 million premature deaths from smoking. The charge is clear.”

The report identifies a number of reasons for the projected increase in African smoking rates:

- The population in Africa is growing and living longer and now accounts for 12 percent of the global population. By 2100, Africa will account for 30 percent of the global population. As the population lives longer, the effects of tobacco use on health become more significant.
- Economic growth of developing countries in Africa is leading to more income for tobacco usage. In the 2000s, Africa experienced some of the strongest economic growth in decades.
- High smoking rates in children: Smoking rates among children appear to be climbing compared to other developing regions. Although the overall smoking rates among men and women in Africa (WHO AFRO region) are low compared to other WHO regions, the increasing rates of smoking among girls and boys in Africa marks a dangerous trend. Among adult men, smoking prevalence is lower than in the rest of the world, with 14 percent of African men smoking. However, among both boys and girls, smoking prevalence in AFRO is 9 percent and 3 percent, respectively, which is higher than in other developing regions.
- Shifting demographics: Over the next century, as the share of population continues to shift away from the developed regions to the developing regions, and as some developing regions become developed regions, so will the proportion of the world’s smokers.

“Just as the demographics and prevalence of tobacco use in Africa are unique, so are the solutions to address this epidemic,” said Hana Ross, American Cancer Society managing director of International Tobacco and one of the study’s authors.

The report outlines a number of key considerations for prevention in low-prevalence countries and both prevention and intervention in moderate prevalence countries:

- In some countries with low prevalence, a pure prevention strategy may be the most appropriate and cost-effective tobacco control strategy; however, in high-prevalence countries a tobacco control strategy that prioritizes intervention may be initially more appropriate, while a significant number of countries with moderate smoking prevalence would require a combination of both prevention and intervention.
- A prevention strategy among children and women is prudent in most developing regions given the low smoking prevalence among this population segment.

- Prevention and intervention strategies will vary depending on economic conditions and smoking prevalence in each country. For example, a well designed tax policy has the ability to both prevent and reduce tobacco use. However, in a less developed country with higher economic growth and low current tobacco use like many African countries, the tobacco industry's pricing strategy might look to absorb the tax increase to keep prices as low as possible in order to maintain the affordability of products with market growth in mind. Conversely, the industry could opt for a different strategy in a more developed economy with significantly lower economic growth and a moderate smoking prevalence with an established base of smokers. There, the industry might choose to pass the tax increase onto smokers.
- Between 2012 and 2020 the implementation and enforcement of evidence based policies in Africa can reduce the number of smokers by 37 million. The impact of these policies will continue to increase over time so that by 2100 an estimated 277 million fewer smokers will live on the continent. In 2020, most of the impact results from intervention strategies that reduce the number of current smokers. From 2040, however, the majority of the impact is due to prevention strategies. Since prevention is cheaper than dealing with a fully developed epidemic, tobacco control will become more cost-effective over time providing even higher return on the investment.

For additional information about the American Cancer Society's international cancer control initiatives or to see a copy of the ***Tobacco Use in Africa: Tobacco Control Through Prevention***, [click here](#) or call 1-800-227-2345.

### **About the American Cancer Society**

The American Cancer Society is a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers saving lives and fighting for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. As the largest voluntary health organization, the Society's efforts have contributed to a 20 percent decline in cancer death rates in the U.S. since 1991, and a 50 percent drop in smoking rates. Thanks in part to our progress nearly 14 million Americans who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will celebrate more birthdays this year. As we mark our 100th birthday in 2013, we're determined to finish the fight against cancer. We're finding cures as the nation's largest private, not-for-profit investor in cancer research, ensuring people facing cancer have the help they need and continuing the fight for access to quality health care, lifesaving screenings, clean air, and more. For more information, to get help, or to join the fight, call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).

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