

# **American Cancer Society to Manage New Effort Against Tobacco in Africa**

## **African Nations Face the Highest Increase in Tobacco Use Among Developing Countries**

ATLANTA 2010/02/04 -The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has given a grant of \$7 million over five years to the American Cancer Society to lead and coordinate the African Tobacco Control Consortium, a global coalition of public health-oriented organizations focusing on using evidence-based approaches to stem the tobacco epidemic in Africa. In addition to the Society, the consortium includes the Africa Tobacco Control Regional Initiative (ATCRI), Africa Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA), Framework Convention Alliance (FCA), Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), and the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union).

In a part of the world that is notably affected by HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other infectious diseases, cancer is emerging as a serious public health threat. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, much of the rise can be attributed to widespread tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the world, and according to the World Health Organization, if current trends continue, tobacco use will cause one billion deaths worldwide during this century.

As the managing organization, the Society will collaborate with consortium partners to implement an ambitious tobacco control program across the 46 countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The overall goal will be to reduce tobacco use in these countries by implementing proven strategies at the national and local level. The consortium will:

- assist national governments and civil society to implement policies such as advertising bans, tobacco tax increases, graphic warning labels, and the promotion of smoke free environments that are in line with the requirements of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the world's first public health treaty;
- advocate for further tobacco control resources in the region;
- protect existing laws from tobacco industry efforts to overturn them and halt crucial progress;
- conduct research to improve/inform future tobacco control work.

"We are excited to be part of this important new effort," said John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., the organization's chief executive officer. "Tobacco companies have begun to target developing countries as tobacco control efforts in high-resource countries have yielded tough restrictions, and we will make sure that the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have the information and tools to protect their citizens from preventable diseases and death caused by tobacco."

"This development will be instrumental to help achieve a coordinated response to the rising rate of tobacco consumption and looming tobacco epidemic in the Africa Region," said ATCRI's Acting Director, Akinbode Oluwafemi of Nigeria.

As part of its ongoing efforts to save lives and help people stay well, get well, find cures, and fight back against cancer, the American Cancer Society has expanded its efforts around the world. In December 2009 several leaders attended the largest-ever gathering of health and government leaders in Africa for a conference on preventing a projected cancer epidemic in Africa. The Society also funds more than 75 tobacco prevention and cancer control grants in African countries, and has conducted workshops to educate journalists and advocates about tobacco and cancer control issues. It is also a leading voice in the Global Smokefree Partnership, which recently published a report calling for greater protection of Africans from secondhand smoke, and exposing the efforts of

tobacco companies to fight against tobacco control progress in African countries.

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing about \$3.4 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, more than 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org/international](http://www.cancer.org/international)

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