

# Millions of Lives at Stake as Tobacco Burden Expected to Escalate in Middle East

## 4th Edition of The Tobacco Atlas Predicts Middle-Eastern Women and Children Face Increasing Risk for Tobacco-related Deaths and Disease

Cairo, Egypt – June 10, 2013 – Middle Eastern countries are a major target for tobacco industry sales and marketing according to the American Cancer Society and World Lung Foundation, co-publishers of *The Tobacco Atlas – 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Experts predict devastating health and economic harm from increased tobacco use in more than 20 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO) of the World Health Organization (WHO). In the first Arabic edition of *The Tobacco Atlas*, released today in Cairo and online at [TobaccoAtlas.org](http://TobaccoAtlas.org), the WHO joined the Atlas publishers to call for immediate attention to this looming health crisis that will escalate without the implementation of proven interventions.

In Egypt alone, 9.7 million people are estimated to smoke tobacco. Each year, 50,000 Egyptians die from tobacco-related diseases, making it the fourth largest cause of death. Currently, tobacco kills nearly six million people per year and the WHO estimates that this figure will be more than eight million by 2030.

The Eastern Mediterranean is one of the few remaining WHO regions where smoking prevalence is still increasing. During the press conference, experts noted that cigarette affordability – a key contributor to consumption – has increased the most in the EMRO countries, out of all of the WHO regions. In 2000-2010, cigarette affordability increased by 47.5 percent in EMRO countries. EMRO countries also account for 98 percent of people who buy tobacco products without a tobacco excise tax. Excise taxes, determined by each country, are important tools for governments to make cigarettes less affordable.

### Children and Women are at Increasing Risk

Women and girls in middle-eastern countries face an imminent risk to harm from tobacco. In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 14 percent of boys and 9 percent of girls currently use tobacco products other than cigarettes, including shisha and smokeless tobacco. According to WHO 11 percent of nonsmoking girls in EMRO countries are at risk of starting smoking within one year. Currently 37.7 percent of men and 0.5 percent of women smoke in Egypt.

### Recent Progress In The Region

Several countries have made recent strides in the Eastern Mediterranean region. For example:

- Lebanon has passed a national law that includes 100% smoke-free public places, bans on tobacco advertising and the introduction of large text warnings on cigarette packs
- Egypt has increased its excise taxes to 78 percent of the cigarette pack price, the highest proportion in the region
- Egypt and Qatar have completed the rigorous Global Adult Tobacco Survey to understand the depth and breadth of the tobacco epidemic in their countries
- Saudi Arabia and Iran both have implemented large graphic pack warnings on cigarette packs
- Libya and Iran have implemented 100% smokefree laws
- Iran, Jordan and Syria have banned all forms of tobacco advertising and sponsorship
- United Arab Emirates will host the next World Conference on Tobacco Or Health in 2015

“The tobacco industry sees women and children in developing countries as a ripe market to expand sales of their deadly products,” said John R. Seffrin, PhD, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society. “This first-ever Arabic edition of *The Tobacco Atlas* is a vital tool for all of those in the region who wish to stop the spread of the deadly tobacco epidemic among the world’s most vulnerable populations.”

“Tobacco use in the Middle East ---cigarettes, shisha and smokeless tobacco --- is a very serious problem that must be reversed. We have an unprecedented opportunity to stop a pandemic in this region,” said Peter Baldini, Chief Executive Officer of World Lung Foundation. “*The Tobacco Atlas* will arm public health officials, committed advocates - many of whom are already engaged in this fight - and communities with critical information to help them fight for policies that help to reduce tobacco use. Proven policies include increased taxes on tobacco products, 100 percent smoke-free environments, effective tobacco warnings and mass media campaigns, and bans on all forms of tobacco marketing and sponsorship. By explaining the burden and implementing these known solutions, the Middle Eastern region and Gulf States can turn the tide on tobacco use.”

In 2011, according to *The Tobacco Atlas*, tobacco use killed almost six million people, with nearly 80 percent of these deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. If trends continue, one billion people will die from tobacco use and exposure during the 21st century – one person every six seconds. Globally, tobacco-related deaths have nearly tripled in the past decade, and tobacco is responsible for more than 15 percent of all male deaths and 7 percent of female deaths.

### **About the Authors**

The three authors of *The Tobacco Atlas* bring a deep knowledge of the tobacco epidemic and its solutions. Michael Eriksen, Sc.D., is a professor and founding director of the Institute of Public Health at Georgia State University. He has been a senior advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO), and was director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Office on Smoking and Health. Hana Ross, Ph.D., is an economist and managing director of international tobacco control research at the American Cancer Society. She has published more than 70 articles and independent reports on issues related to tobacco taxation, cigarette prices, costs of smoking, illicit trade and other economic aspects of tobacco control. Judith Mackay, M.D., is a Fellow of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of Edinburgh and London, and a special advisor at World Lung Foundation. She is also a senior policy advisor to the World Health Organization (WHO) and a director of the Asian Consultancy on Tobacco Control.

### **About the Fourth Edition**

The Fourth Edition of *The Tobacco Atlas* was launched in English on March 21, 2012, at the [World Conference on Tobacco OR Health](#) in Singapore, a decade after the publication of the first edition. The *Atlas* presents the most up-to-date information on tobacco and tobacco control available in a highly graphic, easily understandable format. Data contained within the *Atlas* is gathered from multiple sources and validated to ensure it presents a holistic and accurate picture of tobacco and tobacco control across the globe. The updated version is also available online at [TobaccoAtlas.org](http://TobaccoAtlas.org), where policy makers, public health practitioners, advocates and journalists may interact with the data and create customizable charts, graphs and maps.

### **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). For more information on our global programs, visit [global.cancer.org](http://global.cancer.org) and follow @ACSGlobal on Twitter.

### **About World Lung Foundation**

World Lung Foundation (WLF) was established in response to the global epidemic of lung disease, which kills 10 million people each year. The organization also works on maternal and infant mortality reduction initiatives. WLF improves global health by improving local health capacity, by supporting operational research, by developing public policy and by delivering public education. The organization's areas of emphasis are tobacco control, maternal and infant mortality prevention, tuberculosis, asthma and child lung health. For more information, please visit [worldlungfoundation.org](http://worldlungfoundation.org).

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