

Tobacco Control in Pakistan

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Tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of death in the world.^{1,2} In Pakistan, tobacco is a cause of death of around 160,100 persons every year. Around 1200 Pakistani children between age of 6 & 15 start smoking every day.³⁻⁵

According to Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2015 almost 24 million (19.1%) adults currently use tobacco in any form. That accounts for 15.6 million (12.4%) adults who currently smoke tobacco, including 3.7 million adults using water pipes, hookah or shisha, and another 9.6 million (7.7%) adults who use smokeless tobacco.^{6,7}

To address this major health issue, the Federal Government has taken a number of initiatives. These inter-alia include (i) promulgation of the Cigarette (Printing of Warning) Ordinance, 1979 and the Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-smokers Health Ordinance, 2002 (ii) signing and ratification of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) (iii) creation of National Tobacco Control Cell in 2007.

Pakistan signed and ratified WHO Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (FCTC) in, 2004. Under Article 5.2 of the FCTC, the Parties to the said treaty are mandated to put in place proper and effective national coordination mechanism for multi-sectoral coordination of tobacco control efforts. In order to fulfil obligations under this Article, Tobacco Control Cell was created in Ministry of Health (Defunct) on 1st July, 2007, as a part of non-development budget. The objective of Tobacco Control Cell is to reduce prevalence of tobacco use in Pakistan by taking administrative, legislative and coordination measures and implementation of FCTC Articles. Currently, the Cell has been placed under Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (M/o NHSR&C). Tobacco Control Cell is also mandated to achieve the goals set in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) i.e. SDG 3 (a): Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC); Goal

3.4: To reduce one third premature mortality from Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) by 2030.⁸

Pakistan has made significant achievement in monitoring prevalence of tobacco use through following national/subnational surveys:

- a) Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2014 (Next round in 2019)
- b) Pakistan Demographic Health Survey 2017-18
- c) Global Youth Tobacco Survey, 2013 (Next round since 2018).

Under Article 8 of FCTC regarding protection from exposure to tobacco smoke in indoor workplaces, public transport, indoor public places and other public places, Pakistan has enacted legislative and administrative measures. Under Section-5 of the “Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-Smokers Health Ordinance, 2002”, use of tobacco products at any place of public work or use is prohibited. Under S.R.O 51 (KE)/2009, designated smoking areas have been declared illegal and all places of public work or use have been declared completely smoke-free. Under Section-6 of above-said Ordinance, smoking or use of tobacco in any other form in a public service vehicle is prohibited. This legislation covers use of Smokeless tobacco and sheesha smoking.

Lahore High Court declared adjacent places to hotels / restaurant as public places. Prior to that, smoking was not banned in open to sky places. After this decision, smoking is banned at open to sky places adjacent to hotels and restaurants.

Tobacco Control Cell is coordinating with provincial and district governments to make public places smoke-free. The Tobacco Control Cell is coordinating with Provincial CMs, all Federal Secretaries and provincial Chief Secretaries to ensure enforcement of laws.

In order to fulfill obligations under Article 11 of FCTC,

Pakistan introduced “Pictorial Health Warning (PHW)” on cigarette packets and outers in 2010. This warning was supposed to be rotated on yearly basis. In order to rotate current PHW, Tobacco Control Cell has notified new pictorial health warning and enhanced its sized. Currently this is 60% pictorial health warning on both front and back of cigarette pack.⁹

In line with Article 12 of FCTC, Tobacco Control Cell used multifarious strategies to warn masses about dangers of tobacco use and capacity building of provincial and district law enforcers. In this connection, Provincial and District Implementation Committees on tobacco control have been formed and activated at provincial and district level respectively. Relevant provincial & district departments and authorized persons notified under tobacco control laws have been sensitized. Awareness and capacity building sessions with law enforcement officers & authorized persons have been conducted (402 sessions. Communication materials (1,057,000 units) have been printed and disseminated. Documentary films and FM spots have been produced and aired.

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