

# Reducing health expenditure by tobacco control

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Tobacco use is a major preventable cause of premature death and disease all over the world. In Bangladesh it is consumed at high level both in smoking form such as cigarette, bidi, hukkah and smokeless form such as zarda, sada pata, gul etc.

According to The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS), 23.0 percent of adult men and women (aged 15 years or above) in Bangladesh currently smoke tobacco. The estimated number of current adult tobacco smokers is 21.9 million (21.2 million males and 0.7 million females). A 2004 World Health Organisation (WHO) study observed that 57,000 person's deaths and 382,000 disabilities were attributable to tobacco use in Bangladesh.

In order to reduce the tobacco use various national and international initiatives have been undertaken. Recently the Fourth Session of the FCTC Conference of the Parties (COP-4) was concluded at



Punta Del Este, Uruguay. The meeting accomplished major achievements in public health in the face of unprecedented efforts by the tobacco industry to block progress in reducing the millions of lives lost annually due to tobacco-related diseases.

The COP-4 also voted to create a working group that will draft Guidelines on tobacco taxation. Tobacco tax increases are the single most effective short-term measure to reduce tobacco consumption, but are often blocked by lack of aware-

ness in finance ministries of the added revenue (and public health gains) to be made.

Other important developments during the COP-4 included a decision to continue negotiations on an illicit trade protocol and to initiate work on supporting Parties to deal with liability as well as improvements to the FCTC reporting system.

Bangladesh is one of those countries where both production and consumption of tobacco are high, and it is overburdened with tobacco-related illnesses. Tobacco control can reduce non-communicable diseases and premature deaths significantly. Such control can reduced health expenditure also.

As Bangladesh has been experiencing numerous problems in providing proper health services, tobacco control could help reduced vulnerability of people to various diseases.

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