

# International Tobacco Accountability Bulletin

*News, Updates and Analyses of Issues Related to International Tobacco*

---

## Tobacco: The Global Epidemic

Tobacco is fast becoming the world's leading killer. In 2000, more than four million people died of tobacco-related diseases – that's one every 8 seconds – up 33 percent from only a decade ago.

Yet, while the health hazards of tobacco have already reached epidemic proportions, these statistics are nothing compared to what is to come.

### **The Tobacco Time-Bomb**

According to the World Health Organization tobacco will become the largest single health problem in the world by 2020, killing an estimated 8.4 million people each year, most in low income countries.

While tobacco deaths in high-income countries are projected to rise 50 percent during this period, from 1.6 million to 2.4 million, in Asia deaths will skyrocket nearly fourfold, from 1.1 million to 4.2 million.

If current trends continue, by 2030, 10 million people will die annually from tobacco, 70 percent in low-income countries. This figure is equivalent to nearly 70 747 airplanes full of passengers crashing each and every day.

Between now and then, over 150 million people will die from tobacco, more than all deaths attributed to AIDS, automobile accidents, maternal mortality, homicide, and suicide combined.

### **De-fusing the Epidemic**

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of the global tobacco epidemic is that while it is highly preventable, only a handful of governments have passed effective, comprehensive tobacco control legislation.

Meanwhile, smoking rates continues to rise as millions more young people around the world get hooked to cigarettes each year, between 80,000 – 100,000 each day.

If current tobacco use patterns continue, 250 million children alive today will die of tobacco-related diseases.

These sobering projections need not become reality if governments muster the political will to tackle the global epidemic in a strong, direct manner.

Governments need to stand up to entities with an invested interest in the tobacco industry. International public health must come before industry profits. At stake are literally hundreds of millions of lives.

The epidemic has already begun, but whether or not it follows dire predictions will depend largely on policy decisions that are made today.

*The International Tobacco Accountability Bulletin*  
is produced by Essential Action, a corporate  
accountability group.

Editors: Robert Weissman & Anna White

P.O. Box 19405  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Tel: 202-387-8030  
Fax: 202-234-5176  
Email: [rob@essential.org](mailto:rob@essential.org)  
[www.essentialaction.org](http://www.essentialaction.org)