



International Union Against
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease

Health solutions for the poor

PRESS RELEASE

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Health leaders warn that designated smoking areas threaten public health

Dhaka, Bangladesh / 25 January 2013 — Local and international experts warned this week that designated smoking areas in restaurants and workplaces, as allowed in Bangladesh's proposed Bill for Amending Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act, 2005, will threaten the health of citizens.

Over the past five days, 25 international and local public health experts have participated in a workshop on *'Enforcing Bangladesh's Smokefree Laws,'* organised by the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) and held in the BRAC Centre for Development Management in Rajendrapur.

On the workshop's closing day, 20 participating health leaders and experts from Bangladesh urged the Government to pass proposed amendments to the national smokefree law without further delay, with the exception of the one allowing designated smoking areas in workplaces and restaurants. They expressed deep concern that these smoking areas would expose even those sitting in non-smoking sections of the building to dangerous secondhand smoke. Studies have shown time and again that tobacco smoke can never be effectively contained.

In Bangladesh, the burden of the tobacco epidemic is high, with the deaths of 24% of men and 12% of women attributable to tobacco-related illnesses in 2004. Tobacco users are not the only ones vulnerable to the negative health effects of tobacco smoke. Secondhand smoke puts everyone around smokers at risk too. Exposure to secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, coronary heart disease and cardiac death; and also increases the risks of both TB infection and the development of active TB disease. In children, secondhand smoke exposure causes acute lower respiratory tract infections, sudden infant death syndrome, middle ear infections and exacerbation of asthma. Just 30 minutes of exposure to tobacco smoke changes the way in which blood flows and clots, increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Mr Md. Humayun Kabir, Senior Secretary of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, opened the workshop on Saturday 19 January, stating that while there has been a lot of improvement, there are still weaknesses in Bangladesh's smokefree law that needed to be addressed.

The proposed amendment bill is scheduled for debate in Parliament in the next session, starting 27 January. The delegates from the workshop are forcefully recommending that parliamentarians take this opportunity both to pass the law and to remove the concession that allows for designated smoking rooms.

Delegates at the workshop also expressed concern that there has been insufficient investment in training and empowering officers to enforce the 2005 Smoking and Using of Tobacco Products (Control) Act, which restricts smoking in public places such as healthcare and educational facilities.

The Union, which is supporting the efforts of over 40 countries to fulfil their commitments under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), also hopes to see the Government pass a 100% smokefree law, without any accommodation for designated smoking areas. Such a law will be in compliance with FCTC guidelines and ensure a safer smokefree future for Bangladesh.

About The Union

The mission of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) is to bring innovation, expertise, solutions and support to address health challenges in low- and middle-income populations. With nearly 10,000 members and subscribers from 150 countries, The Union has its headquarters in Paris and offices serving the Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America and South-East Asia regions. Its scientific departments focus on tuberculosis and HIV, lung health and non-communicable diseases, tobacco control and research. Learn more at www.theunion.org.

The Union has been working on tobacco control in Bangladesh since 2007 under the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use. Globally, the Department of Tobacco Control, been working to advance tobacco control in low- and middle-income countries for more than 25 years, with a focus on supporting effective tobacco control programmers though grants and promoting effective tobacco control through training, resources and research.

www.tobaccofreeunion.org.

About the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the first international public health treaty. It was adopted by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003 and entered into force on 27 February 2005. Among other measures to reduce the burden of the tobacco epidemic, the convention requires countries to protect their citizens from exposure to tobacco smoke. Bangladesh was an early signatory to the Convention in 2004.

<http://www.who.int/fctc/about/en/index.html>