

TOBACCO CONTROL AND REGULATION IN AFRICA: CONSTRAINTS AND NECESSARY INTERVENTIONS

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One of the more visible negative consequences of globalization and improving economic outlook in Africa is a surge in the number of smokers in the region. Recent figures indicate that the region is tethering on the brink of a tobacco epidemic. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), deaths resulting from noncommunicable diseases (NCD) in Africa, a significant number of which are tobacco-related, will increase 27 percent over the next decade—second only to Russia. For a region whose population is suffocating under the stranglehold of underperforming health systems and decades-long institutional ineptitude, this data is troubling and should be a source of concern to its political leadership as well as the global health community. Taking this concern seriously requires channeling available resources toward curbing or reversing the surge. On a positive note, the fact that the vast majority of African countries are Parties to

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WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which is aimed at freeing humanity from the scourge of tobacco-related diseases and deaths, is quite encouraging. Nonetheless—and this is the crux of this Article—it is not clear whether domestic legal and policy regimes in these countries as well as the environments they foster are consistent with international standards and global best practices. Are there deficits or gaps in need of urgent attention in the realm of tobacco use and control activities in the region? If the response is affirmative, as this Article proposes to show, then, the next question is, how can these deficits be effectively tackled? Responding to these concerns is the central task of this Article—a task that is accomplished by assessing FCTC implementation levels in Africa based on the prescriptions of WHO's MPOWER policy package.