

Current Health Event

World No Tobacco Day 2015 "Stop Tobacco Illicit Trade"

On World No Tobacco Day 31 May 2015, WHO calls on countries to stop the illicit trade of tobacco products, by committing to, and becoming Party to the Protocol to Eliminate Tobacco Illicit Trade.

Editorial note:

Adult smoking prevalence in Lebanon has been reported to be as high as 45% for males and 35% for females, considerably higher than the regional average in the Middle East and North Africa region (38%, 7%) according to the National Tobacco Control Program.

In addition, the Global Youth Tobacco Survey conducted in Lebanon in 2011 indicated that cigarette smoking prevalence among school students between ages 13-15 years old was 17.7% in boys and 6% in girls. Experts estimate that in Lebanon 150,000 children and 350,000 adults will die prematurely because of smoking or second-hand smoke, unless tobacco control is increased.

Cigarettes, *shisha* and smokeless tobacco are being smuggled across borders worldwide. These illicit products are untaxed and unregulated, with no health warnings, packaging or labelling requirements; which makes them cheaper, more readily available and accessible, especially to young and poor people.

Affordability and accessibility lead to increased use, this downward spiral into poverty and illness because of money spent on tobacco, and additional money spent on treating its ill-health effects, has dire health and economic consequences.



"Eliminating the illicit trade of tobacco products", explains Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, "will increase tobacco product prices, lower consumption, reduce premature deaths, and increase government revenues".

Tobacco use in many countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is very high with up to 36% of adolescents and 32% of adults using tobacco. The illicit trade of tobacco products increases tobacco use among youth and other age groups.

- Illicit tobacco products hook young people into tobacco experimentation and use.
- tobacco companies have been known to use loopholes in tobacco control governance systems and indulge in the illicit trade of tobacco products.

Lebanon was one of the first signatory countries of the WHO FCTC. A National Program for Tobacco control was established in 1997 jointly between the Ministry of Public Health and WHO. WHO Lebanon supports the implementation of effective tobacco control interventions in line with best practice and evidence-based policies. Lebanon issued the law 174 on Tobacco Control in Public Places based on the WHO FCTC and is working towards its implementation.

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon (Syrian)				
Disease	2014	2015 Cumul*	Apr	May
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0	0(0)	0(0)
Acute Flaccid Paralysis	53(16)	35(4)	8(0)	5(0)
Measles	235(107)	19(4)	6(0)	3(1)
Mumps	736(117)	848(170)	191(34)	73(9)
Pertussis	87(25)	16(4)	4(0)	1(0)
Rabies	1(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	18(12)	5(0)	1(0)	0(0)
Tetanus	0(0)	1(0)	0(0)	1(0)
Viral Hep B	218(33)	91(16)	29(4)	4(1)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	252(36)	70(18)	21(4)	8(0)
Cholera	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Hydatid cyst	16(2)	9(1)	1(0)	0(0)
Typhoid				
Fever	546(33)	153(16)	33(3)	16(0)
Viral Hep A	2582(911)	497(107)	63(11)	13(2)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	663(638)	19(12)	6(4)	0(0)
Meningitis	232(35)	135(29)	28(6)	14(3)
Viral Hep C	100(6)	43(1)	10(0)	3(0)

Source: Ministry of Public Health as of 29 May 2015