

Harvesting the Evidence



• ritc  rmct •

research for international tobacco control
recherche pour la lutte mondiale contre le tabac

TOBACCO & DEVELOPMENT

Tobacco use poses a major threat to the health of developing country populations and their economies. These countries now account for 70 percent of global tobacco consumption. By 2030, they will also account for 70 percent of the world's 10 million annual tobacco-related deaths.

Tobacco use is a risk factor for several types of cancer, respiratory illnesses, and cardiovascular disease. While smoking rates in developing countries are highest among men, they are rapidly rising among women and youth who are the targets of aggressive marketing campaigns, even in countries where cultural norms have helped maintain low rates among women. Babies born to women who smoke often have lower birth weight, which increases their chances of suffering from developmental and health problems. Children's health is endangered as they are exposed to second hand smoke in the home.

Tobacco cultivation is itself associated with many social, economic, and environmental problems. Tobacco farming poses occupational hazards, especially for women and children who are often responsible for most of the menial work in the fields and curing barns. Labour-intensive, tobacco

farming draws family members away from other activities – such as education. It also depletes soil nutrients faster than most other crops and requires the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides. Farmers in developing countries, where 70 percent of the world's tobacco is grown, receive only a small percentage of the profits that tobacco generates. Furthermore, curing the tobacco consumes hundreds



RITC's Strategic Program Areas

of thousands of hectares of woodland each year.

More research is required to serve as a basis for policies that will address the adverse health, social, environmental and economic effects of tobacco on developing countries and their populations. Research for International Tobacco Control (RITC) is committed to supporting this research. One of RITC's four strategic program areas is the provision of grant funding to researchers and institutions in developing countries. RITC aims to create a strong funding and knowledge base for the development of effective tobacco control policies and programs that will minimize the threat tobacco production and consumption pose to health and human development in developing countries.



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Capacity Building

The lack of adequate capacity to conduct tobacco control research, especially in non-health related areas such as economics and policy analysis, is a major impediment to researchers and institutions in the South in their efforts to provide credible evidence to support the development of tobacco control policies and programs.

RITC aims to strengthen individual and institutional capacity for tobacco control research in developing countries through activities such as research fellowships, small research grants, and support of RITC-funded researchers at international conferences.

Research Priorities

RITC's research priorities are drawn from a global tobacco control research agenda¹. RITC supports policy-relevant tobacco control research in four areas:

The Health and Social Implications of Tobacco Use including:

- the determinants of tobacco use among high-risk populations, particularly women and children;
- the level of awareness among different segments of the population of the health risks associated with tobacco use;
- behaviours and attitudes with respect to tobacco control measures;
- how social norms regarding tobacco are formed and transmitted.

The Economics of Tobacco Use including:

- the relationship between tobacco use and poverty;
- elasticity of demand studies to determine optimal levels of taxation according to social class, age and geographic conditions;
- the determinants, process and impact of illegal trafficking;
- opportunities for and barriers to the harmonization of prices at the regional level.

Legislative and Policy Analysis including:

- the effect of international trade agreements on production, trade and marketing of tobacco products;
- empirical and theoretical research to assist in drafting, implementing and evaluating tobacco control policies;
- monitoring the effect of tobacco control policies and legislation, such as clean indoor air policies, bans on marketing, advertising and promotion, and restrictions on young people's access to tobacco.

Tobacco Farming and Alternative Livelihoods including:

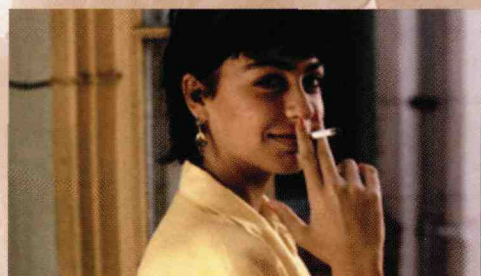
- the relationship of tobacco production to human health and destruction of the ecosystem, particularly with respect to deforestation, pesticides, and degradation of soil nutrients;
- attitudes, beliefs and practices of tobacco farmers and the underlying historical/cultural context;
- economic impact of tobacco control on developing countries that grow and manufacture tobacco and mechanisms to support diversification;
- opportunities for alternative crops and sustainable livelihoods;
- impact of tobacco cultivation and curing on women and children.



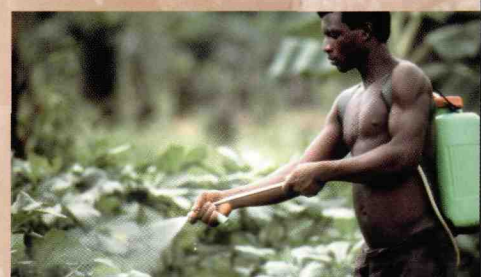
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¹ *Confronting the Epidemic: A Global Agenda for Tobacco Control Research*. Geneva: WHO/RITC, 1999.

Research for International Tobacco Control (RITC) is an international Secretariat housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada. Established in 1994, RITC assures a strong funding base for tobacco control research that contributes to effective public policies in developing countries. The Secretariat was housed at IDRC to reflect its primary focus on both research and development and is the only international body to concentrate solely on supporting policy-relevant tobacco control research in developing countries. RITC is identified by the World Health Organization's Tobacco Free Initiative as a partner in expanding the evidence-base for tobacco control initiatives through research.



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RITC aims to:

- provide technical and financial support for multi-disciplinary, policy-relevant international tobacco control research;
- strengthen individual and institutional capacity for tobacco control research in developing countries;
- advocate for research related to both the production and consumption of tobacco in developing countries;
- catalyze financial, intellectual and technical support for tobacco control research in developing countries.

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- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- Health Canada
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

For further information,
please visit our website at
<http://www.idrc.ca/tobacco>

or write to:
The Coordinator
Research for International Tobacco Control (RITC)
c/o International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
P.O. Box 8500 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3H9

E-mail: ritc@idrc.ca

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