

RAPID EXPANSION IN SMOKEFREE LAWS SINCE 2004, BUT MOST WORKERS STILL EXPOSED TO TOBACCO SMOKE NEW REPORT FINDS

International health organizations call for increase in countries with smokefree laws

Some 32 countries now have good national or local laws to protect workers from the poisons in secondhand smoke, according to a new report from the Global Smokefree Partnership (GSP). The report – titled *Working for a Smokefree Future* - shows that smokefree air laws can work anywhere. Yet despite very rapid progress, more than nine in ten workers around the world have no legal protection from secondhand smoke at work. The report was released to mark International Workers' Day today.

The report calculates that since 2004 the number of countries with good national or local smokefree laws has risen from seven to 32. If this pace of change is maintained, the majority of the world's workers could be protected from secondhand smoke within the next five years.

Secondhand smoke is a major workplace health hazard, containing substances known to cause cancer as well as poisons and irritants that cause heart disease and exacerbate lung conditions. Exposure to secondhand smoke accounts for one in seven work-related deaths worldwide, according to the International Labor Organization.

The report says that most of the world's workers would be protected, if the 154 countries that have ratified a global tobacco treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), met their treaty commitments on smokefree air. The legally binding treaty says governments must introduce effective protection from secondhand smoke. Guidelines agreed last year say that effective protection means that all interior work places and public places should be 100% smokefree - with no exempt premises, no exceptions for ventilated or air conditioned smoking areas and no Designated Smoking Rooms. The guidelines call for comprehensive smokefree laws to be put in place within five years.

In addition to countries introducing new laws for the first time, GSP says that some countries must improve their existing laws. In some places, the most heavily exposed workers receive the least protection because their worksites are exempt from existing laws. This is a particular problem for those who work in the hospitality sector. In other countries, laws are ineffective because governments have not devoted resources to implementing or enforcing them.

The report provides information about successful laws - showing that smokefree laws have proved to be good for health and good for the economy, popular and enforceable. Featured countries include Uruguay, Ireland, New Zealand, France, South Africa, and Thailand. The potential for local laws to drive change is also explored in countries including Australia, India, China, Argentina and the United States.

Shoba John, co-chair of GSP and programme director of HealthBridge India said.

“The report shows that immense progress has been made, with hundreds of millions of workers protected from secondhand smoke already. It is great to see that smokefree laws are working so successfully and protecting health in such a range of countries. But it also shows that we must keep up the pressure to get this protection extended to everyone as soon as possible.”

Deborah Arnott, co-chair of GSP and director of Action on Smoking and Health, London, said.

“We’re calling on governments to meet their commitments, and protect all workers. Secondhand smoke is a major health hazard, and it is entirely preventable. The evidence is clear – these laws work, and they bring health and economic benefits. There can be no delay - all the world’s workers should be able to breathe smokefree air at work.”

Notes for Editors

The Global Smokefree Partnership is a new multipartner initiative formed to promote effective smoke-free air policies worldwide. Partners include Action for the Promotion of

Smoke-free Environments (APALTA), Action on Smoking and Health London, American for Nonsmokers Rights, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Cancer Research UK, Coalition for Tobacco Control Pakistan, European Respiratory Society, FCTC Alliance Philippines (FCAP), French National Cancer Institute (INCa), Global Tobacco Research Network, HealthBridge India, HERO-Uganda, International Nongovernmental Coalition Against Tobacco, International Union Against Cancer, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Institute for Global Tobacco Control, Johnson and Johnson, Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance, Pfizer, the World Heart Federation and Action on Smoking and Health. The Partnership is coordinated by the American Cancer Society and the Framework Convention Alliance.

The report: *Working for a Smokefree World*, including a high resolution map can be downloaded from www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org . The map can be freely reproduced, if attributed to the Global Smokefree Partnership.

For more information on the Global Smokefree Partnership and its Global Voices campaign, visit: www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org.

For more information on the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, visit www.fctc.org.

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