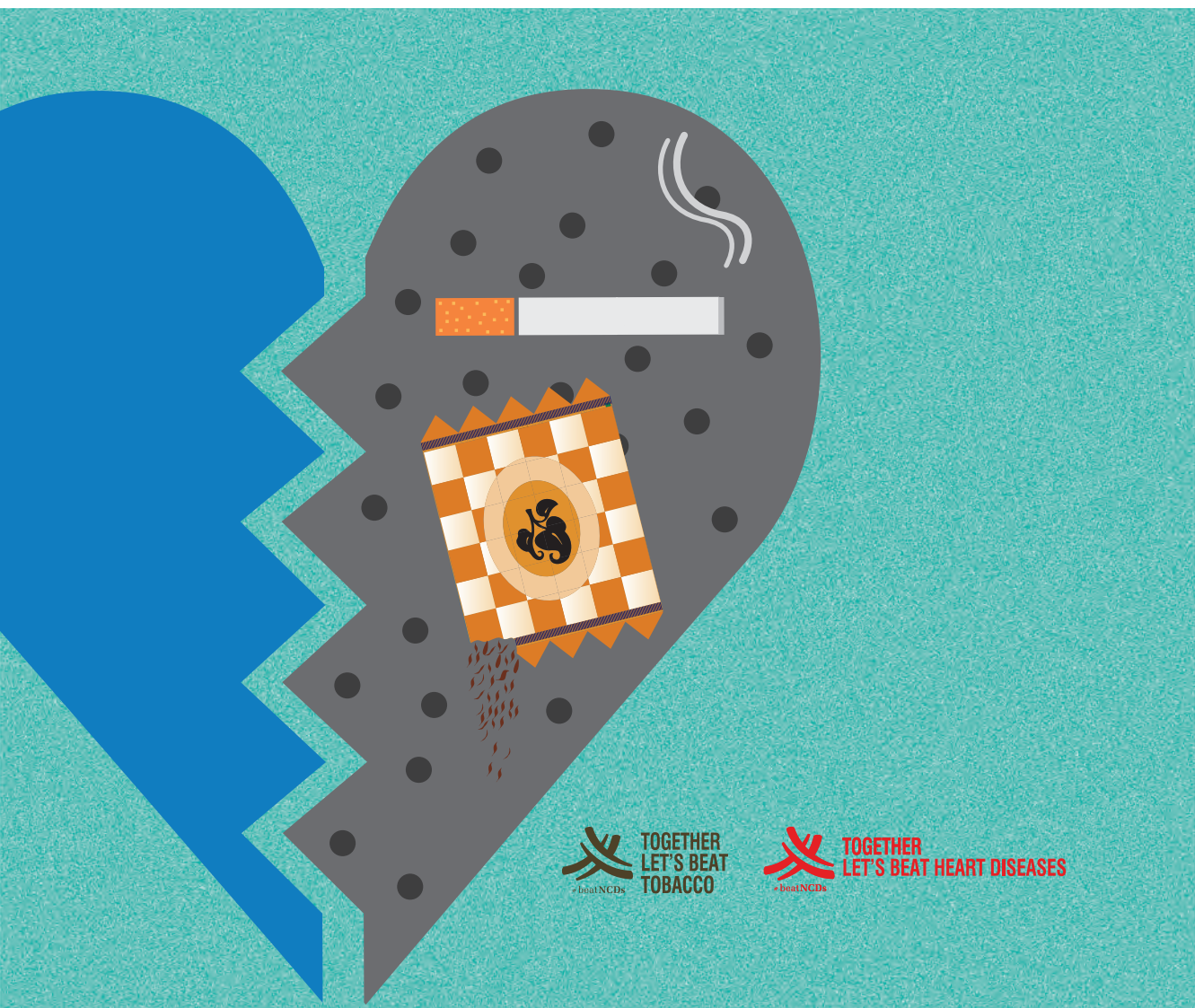


# The fatal link between tobacco and cardiovascular diseases

in the WHO South-East Asia Region

May 2018





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# Contents

Foreword by Regional Director .....	v
Acknowledgement .....	vi
Acronyms .....	vii
Key messages .....	viii
Regional context.....	1
The leading cause of death and leading risk factor in WHO South-East Asia Region .....	1
How does tobacco kill? The relationship between leading cause of death and the leading risk factor .....	1
Age and tobacco as a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases .....	4
How tobacco use and secondhand exposure to tobacco is related to heart disease and stroke .....	5
The way forward .....	8
References .....	12
Country factsheets	
Bangladesh .....	17
Bhutan .....	19
India .....	21
Indonesia .....	23
Maldives .....	25
Myanmar .....	27
Nepal .....	29
Sri Lanka .....	31
Thailand .....	33
Timor-Leste .....	35



## Foreword by Regional Director



Tobacco continues to be a major public health problem in the WHO South-East Asia Region. With more than 246 million smokers and 290 million smokeless tobacco users, it is the single largest preventable risk factor for disease in the Region. The most common way by which tobacco kills is by causing cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), including heart disease and stroke, which are the leading killers in the Region.

Cardiovascular diseases account for almost 45% of all deaths related to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), and hence their control would be central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target that calls for a reduction in premature mortality from NCDs by one third by 2030. Given that almost half of all the 1.51 million tobacco-related deaths are from CVDs, effective tobacco control will be central to any efforts to reduce overall premature mortality from NCDs and achievement of the SDGs.

The good news is that quitting tobacco use at any age reduces the risk of CVD immediately. Establishing and strengthening cessation services as an integral part of national tobacco control programmes would thus be critical to reducing CVD-related disability and death among existing users, in addition to full implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to prevent initiation of tobacco use.

This brief report is being launched on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day 2018 with the campaign theme “Tobacco breaks heart”. It is intended to increase commitment to tobacco control by increasing awareness of the link between tobacco use and CVDs—the leading killer in most of the countries in the Region. It calls for urgent actions to accelerate national efforts and invest more resources to prevent and control tobacco use and strengthen multisectoral programmes for overall control of CVDs. Failing to do this would result in social, human and economic costs that will overwhelm our systems and economies, and challenge the Region’s ability to successfully pursue the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Poonam Khetrpal Singh".

Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh  
Regional Director  
WHO South-East Asia

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