World Health Organization
ECONOMICS OF TOBACCO TOOLKIT

Assessment of the Economic Costs of Smoking

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I. Introduction

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in high-income countries, and increasingly in low- and middle-income countries. Today, tobacco use causes more than five million deaths per year among adults worldwide (Mathers and Loncar, 2006). By 2030, tobacco's annual death toll will rise to more than eight million per year and more than 80% of the world's tobacco-related deaths will be in low- and middle-income countries (Mathers and Loncar, 2006; Murray and Lopez, 1997; World Health Organization, 2008).

In addition to mortality, tobacco use also causes preventable diseases, poor health, and disability. Numerous epidemiological and laboratory research studies have revealed scientific evidence linking smoking and disease. The 2004 U.S. Surgeon General's Report concluded that cigarette smoking harms nearly every organ of the body (US DHHS, 2004). One efficient way to assess the adverse health effects of smoking on a society is to translate smoking-caused illnesses, premature mortality, and productivity losses into economic terms, a universal marker for measuring the adverse effects of smoking.

Most studies of the economic burden of cigarette smoking have been conducted in the United States and other high-income countries. It was found that annual smoking-attributable healthcare costs account for 6-15% of national healthcare expenditures in the United States and other high-income countries (Warner and Hodgson et al., 1999; World Bank, 1999). Considering both the smoking-attributable healthcare costs and the value of lost productivity caused by smoking-attributable