

MEDIA COVERAGE



Knowledge Brief

October 2025

No. 2025:134

Tobacco in Transition: Global Practices, Regional Insights, and Pakistan's Policy Imperative

Mehwish Mumtaz

Assistant Chief (Policy), PIDE

Executive Summary

Tobacco use in Pakistan continues to pose a serious challenge to public health and the national economy. While Pakistan ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004 and later launched the National Tobacco Control Strategy (2022–2030) (Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, 2022), the implementation of these measures has been inconsistent. This brief examines the current status of tobacco control efforts in the country, evaluates them in light of global and regional practices, and offers realistic, evidence-based policy suggestions. Findings highlight persistent issues such as weak enforcement, a complicated tax system, an unregulated smokeless tobacco market, and insufficient cessation programs. To lessen the country's growing health and economic burden from tobacco, it is vital to streamline the tax framework, strengthen and align regulations, and adopt a harm reduction strategy built on

Knowledge Brief: Tobacco in Transition: Global Practices, Regional Insights, and Pakistan's Policy Imperative

The News International

<https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=445502>

Samaa News

<https://www.samaa.tv/2087341818-economic-losses-from-tobacco-reach-rs700bn-annually-report>

Global News Pakistan

<https://globalnewspakistan.com/2025/11/14/pide-urges-immediate-tobacco-control-reforms-to-protect-lives-and-strengthen-economy/>

APP Pakistan

<https://www.app.com.pk/business/pide-calls-for-urgent-tobacco-control-reforms-to-save-lives-boost-economy/>

Urdu Point

<https://www.urdupoint.com/daily/livenews/2025-11-14/news-4618269.html>

Daily Qudrat

<https://dailyqudrat.pk/421862/>

Raees ul Akhbar

<https://raeesulakhbar.com/pakistan-tobacco-economic-loss-700-billion/>

Daily Express

<https://www.express.pk/story/2787048/tobacco-causes-annual-economic-losses-of-rs-700-billion-in-the-country-reveals-report-2787048>

Al Qamar Online

<https://www.alqamar.info/news/2025/11/14/298265>

Rehber News

https://rehbernews.com/news_single_category.php?id=64190

Tameer e Watan

<https://twatan.net/27641/>

Urgent tobacco reforms can save lives, boost economy

Rasheed Khalid

Islamabad

Mehwish Mumtaz from Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has stressed that Pakistan's challenge is not the absence of laws but the failure to enforce them effectively.

Ms Mumtaz said this at the issuance of Knowledge Brief on "Tobacco in transition: global practices, regional insights and Pakistan's policy imperative" by PIDE.

Ms Mumtaz who is also author of the brief noted that simplifying the excise tax structure, strengthening regulatory coordination, regulating smokeless tobacco and expanding quitting support could save thousands of lives while restoring fiscal stability.

Drawing on international evidence, the brief highlighted successes from countries like Sierra Leone which passed a comprehensive Tobacco and Nicotine Control Act after an economic investment case justified the reforms, Uzbekistan, which strengthened tobacco regulations consistently for nearly three decades and the United Kingdom and Sweden where strictly regulated alterna-

tives and harm-reduction strategies helped reduce adult smoking rates to historic lows.

In South Asia, countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal faced similar implementation gaps despite strong legislation mirroring Pakistan's enforcement challenges and further emphasising the need for consistent policy execution.

The Knowledge Brief outlined several critical weaknesses: Pakistan's multi-tier excise system keeping low-cost cigarettes within reach, particularly for the youth; enforcement remained uneven due to weak provincial coordination; smokeless tobacco products such as 'naswar' and 'gutka' remained largely outside regulatory oversight and cessation support being extremely limited, leaving smokers with minimal access to cost-covered counselling or nicotine replacement therapy.

The brief also warns that while alternative products like e-cigarettes are widely debated, any harm-reduction approach must be rooted in science and governed by strict regulation, particularly to prevent youth initiation.

To address these challenges, brief recommended replacing the current multi-tiered tax structure with a single, high specific excise tax, a globally recognised tool for reducing consumption and increasing revenue. It also called for stronger national coordination, full digital integration of track-and-trace systems to curb illicit trade and the inclusion of smokeless tobacco and novel products under mainstream regulatory and taxation systems.

The expansion of nationwide quit-support services including national helplines, cost-covered cessation therapies and integrated counselling formed another essential component of the proposed reforms.

The brief concludes with a compelling warning: Pakistan's tobacco burden will continue to escalate unless the country shifts decisively from policy intent to policy action. Stronger governance, modernised taxation, coordinated enforcement and science-based regulation can significantly reduce premature deaths, ease pressure on the health system and safeguard families from the long-term financial and health consequences of tobacco-related diseases.

PIDE calls for urgent tobacco control reforms

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has issued a powerful call for urgent action through its latest Knowledge Brief, Tobacco in Transition: Global Practices, Regional Insights, and Pakistan's Policy Imperative, highlighting that Pakistan's tobacco epidemic continues to worsen due to weak enforcement, fragmented regulation, and outdated fiscal policies. According to the brief, tobacco kills 164,000 Pakistanis every year and inflicts nearly PKR 700 billion in economic losses equivalent to 1 percent of GDP with these losses increasing by 31 percent over the past decade, underscoring the heavy toll weak policy implementation places on public health and the national economy. Pakistan has comprehensive tobacco control laws, including commitments under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and the National Tobacco Control Strategy (2022–2030), but enforcement remains inconsistent across provinces, allowing cheaper cigarette brands to remain accessible, smokeless tobacco to flourish unchecked, and illicit trade to capture almost one-third of the national market. Mehwish Mumtaz, Assistant Chief (Policy) at PIDE and author of the brief, stresses that Pakistan's challenge is not the absence of laws but the failure to enforce them effectively. She notes that simplifying the excise tax structure, strengthening regulatory coordination, regulating smokeless tobacco, and expanding quitting support could save thousands of lives while restoring fiscal stability. Drawing on international evidence, the brief highlights successes from countries such as Sierra Leone, which passed a comprehensive Tobacco and Nicotine Control Act after an economic investment case justified the reforms; Uzbekistan, which strengthened tobacco regulations consistently for nearly three decades; and the United Kingdom and Sweden, where strictly regulated alternatives and harm-reduction strategies have helped reduce adult smoking rates to historic lows. In South Asia, countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal face similar implementation gaps despite having strong legislation—mirroring Pakistan's enforcement challenges and further emphasizing the need for consistent policy execution. The Knowledge Brief outlines several critical weaknesses: Pakistan's multi-tier excise system keeps low-cost cigarettes within reach, particularly for the youth; enforcement remains uneven due to weak provincial coordination; smokeless tobacco products such as naswar and gutka remain largely outside regulatory oversight; and cessation support is extremely limited, leaving smokers with minimal access to cost-covered counselling or nicotine replacement therapy.—DNA

Samaa Breaking News

اہم خبر

ملک میں تمباکو سے سالانہ
700 ارب روپے معاشی
نقصان کا انکشاف

طالبان رجم کے بعد افغان سرزمین سے دہشتگرد حملہ بڑھ گئے، ترجمان دفتر خارجہ

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14 Nov | Fri

اہم خبر

تمباکو ہر سال 1 لاکھ
64 ہزار پاکستانیوں کی
جان لیتا ہے، رپورٹ

نمائندہ خصوصی

سرکاری مشینری اور وسائل کا استعمال ضابطہ اخلاق کے خلاف ہے، فیصلہ

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22 جمادی الاول

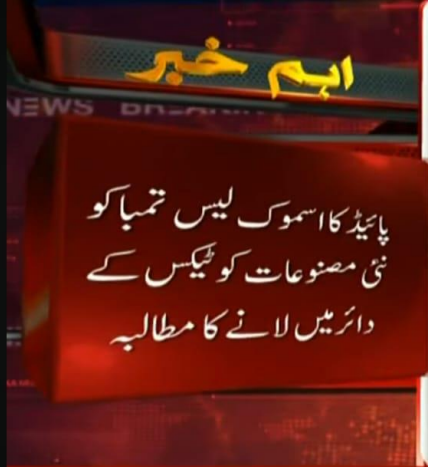
and-trace systems to curb illicit trade, and the inclusion of smokeless tobacco and novel products under mainstream regulatory and taxation systems. The expansion of nationwide quit-support services—including national helplines, cost-covered cessation therapies, and integrated counseling—forms another essential component of the proposed reforms.

The brief concludes with a compelling warning Pakistan's tobacco burden will continue to escalate unless the country shifts decisively from policy intent to policy action. Stronger governance, modernised taxation, coordinated enforcement, and science-based regulation can significantly reduce premature deaths, ease pressure on the health system, and safeguard families from the long-term financial and health consequences of tobacco-related diseases. Every year of delay, the brief stresses, costs Pakistan lives, productivity, and billions in economic losses. It is time to turn policy commitments into concrete, measurable outcomes.

The complete Knowledge Brief is available on our website:
<https://pide.org.pk/research/tobacco-in-transition-global-practices-regional-insights-and-pakistans-policy-imperative/>

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Islamabad - November 14, 2025

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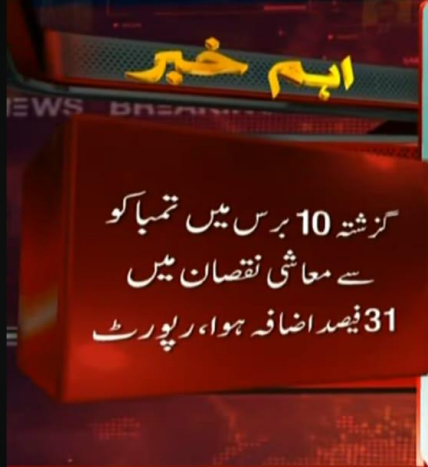
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مہیش ام



کے پی حکومت جلسوں، لانگ مارچ میں سرکاری وسائل استعمال نہ کرے، فیصلہ



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Tobacco use in Pakistan continues to pose a serious challenge to public health and the national economy. While Pakistan ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2004 and later launched the National Tobacco Control Strategy (2022-2030), the country's tobacco epidemic has worsened. The brief highlights the need for consistent policy execution, including strengthening regulatory coordination, simplifying the excise tax structure, and expanding quitting support. Drawing on international evidence, the brief highlights successes from countries such as Sierra Leone, which passed a comprehensive Tobacco and Nicotine Control Act after an economic investment case justified the reforms; Uzbekistan, which strengthened tobacco regulations consistently for nearly three decades; and the United Kingdom and Sweden, where strictly regulated alternatives and harm-reduction strategies have helped reduce adult smoking rates to historic lows. In South Asia, countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal face similar implementation gaps despite having strong legislation—mirroring Pakistan's enforcement challenges and further emphasizing the need for consistent policy execution.



مہیش ام



حکومت جلسوں، ملین مارچ میں سرکاری وسائل استعمال کرتی ہے، فیصلہ



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مہیش ام



سرکاری مشینری اور وسائل کا استعمال ضابطہ اخلاق کے خلاف ہے، فیصلہ



اہم خبر

BREAKING NEWS

گزشتہ 10 برس میں تمباکو سے معاشی نقصان میں 31 فیصد اضافہ ہوا، رپورٹ

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Tobacco use in Pakistan continues to pose a serious challenge to public health and the national economy. Pakistan ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004, but has not fully implemented the national tobacco control strategy. The brief explores global and regional practices, and outlines Pakistan's policy imperative.



مہیش امیر



آئین کے آرٹیکل 25 کے تحت سرکاری وسائل کسی ایک گروپ، جماعت کے نہیں ہوتے، فیصلہ



اہم خبر

BREAKING NEWS

تمباکو ہر سال 1 لاکھ 64 ہزار پاکستانیوں کی جان لیتا ہے، رپورٹ

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The brief concludes with a compelling warning: Pakistan's tobacco burden will continue to escalate unless the country shifts decisively from policy intent to policy action. Stronger governance, modernised taxation, coordinated enforcement, and science-based regulation can significantly reduce premature deaths, ease pressure on the health system, and safeguard families from the long-term financial and health consequences of tobacco-related diseases. Every year of delay, the brief stresses, costs Pakistan lives, productivity, and billions in economic losses. It is time to turn policy commitments into concrete, measurable outcomes.

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نمائندہ خصوصی



پشاور: جسٹس صاحبزادہ اسد اللہ نے 4 صفحات کا تحریری فیصلہ جاری کر دیا



اہم خبر

BREAKING NEWS

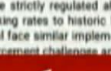
قوانین کے کمزور نفاذ اور پرانے قوانین کے باعث تمباکو دہشتگین ہو گئی، پالیٹیڈ

- PKR 700 Billion Lost Annually: PIDE Calls for Immediate Tobacco Control Reforms
- Lives Lost, Revenue Drained – PIDE Exposes Pakistan's Tobacco Burden

Islamabad – November 14, 2025

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مہیش امیر



دہشتگردوں کی پشت پناہی کرنے والوں کیلئے فرم گوشہ نہیں ہونا چاہیے، ترجمان





PIDE Calls for Urgent Tobacco Control Reforms to Save Lives and Boost Pakistan's Economy

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- Lives Lost, Revenue Drained – PIDE Exposes Pakistan's Tobacco Burden

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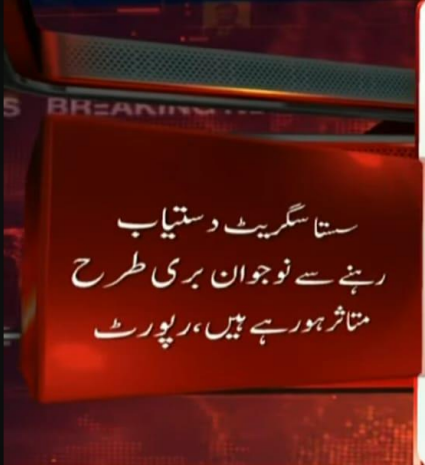
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پاکستان کسی دہشتگرد تنظیم سے مذاکرات نہیں کرے گا، ترجمان دفتر خارجہ

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