

Interagency Committee on Smoking and Health
April 13, 2005
“Addressing the Global Tobacco Epidemic”
Overview of Global Tobacco Use and Prevention — Presentation Notes

International Efforts in Global Tobacco Control and Prevention – Country Presentations

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Dr. Reddy began by providing a brief history of tobacco in India, and said that tobacco cultivation in the country has a history of over 8,000 years. While the entry of European powers into India spurred the import of tobacco into the country, investment in production and export came later during British rule.

There are many different types of tobacco use in India, including both smoked and smokeless forms and despite social disapproval of tobacco, its cultivation in India has continued because of domestic and international demand for products such as bidis. In fact, India is the world’s second largest producer of tobacco and also the second largest consumer of unmanufactured tobacco. Clearly, tobacco exacts huge social costs to the Indian economy, which Dr. Reddy believes have been made somewhat opaque by tobacco industry tactics and practices.

In terms of tobacco use prevalence in the country, over half of all males between 12–60 years currently use tobacco, and there is a widespread smokeless tobacco problem among women, particularly among those who are poor. Among youth, two in every ten boys and one in every ten girls use a tobacco product, and the age of initiation is decreasing — including an increase in those under age ten who are starting to use tobacco products. Overall, smoking currently causes about 700,000 deaths per year in India with the fastest trajectory of the rise in tobacco-related deaths forecast for the next 20 years.

Dr. Reddy continued with a discussion of the origin of tobacco control efforts in India and talked about how the growing body of scientific literature supporting the dangers of tobacco use has led to several successful legislative efforts beginning in the mid–1970s. Several of the landmark events that occurred between this period and the present include the regulation of the production, supply and distribution of cigarettes in 1975 to the banning of smoking in public places by the Supreme Court of India in 2001. In addition, key provisions of the Cigarette and other Tobacco Product Act of 2003 include bans on advertising of tobacco products, ban on sales to minors, pictorial health warnings on cigarette packs, and ingredient

disclosure. Challenges to the implementation of such stringent regulations are always present, and Dr. Reddy outlined several of these which include violations on the advertising bans as well as violations of the bans on smoking in public places.

In closing, Dr. Reddy talked about some of the next steps that need to be taken in tobacco control efforts in India, including the need for a uniform tax across all tobacco products and the need for the country's legislation to be amended to comply with the provisions of the FCTC, which has been ratified by the country.