



Protecting the Future: Policy Solutions to Ensure Tobacco Prevention and Awareness in the DRC

Executive Summary

Tobacco use remains one of the most significant and preventable public health threats facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Rising consumption, especially among youth and in rural areas, threatens to create a long-term epidemic of non-communicable diseases, including cancers, respiratory illnesses, and cardiovascular diseases. Despite existing public health laws, major regulation gaps, limited public awareness, and aggressive industry marketing continue to expose the population to tobacco's harms. This document presents a brief summary on various effective prevention mechanisms for upstream action and for protecting the population from the harmful effects of tobacco use, in accordance with Article 12 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), in synergy with Articles 6, 8, 11, and 13.

The Problem: Gaps in the Current Landscape

- The DRC public health law does not cover new tobacco products such as electronic cigarettes and nicotine pouches. **Articles 110–117** of the Public Health Act in the Democratic Republic of Congo focus on traditional products: smoked tobacco or chewed tobacco/snuff. They contain no specific definition of modern products (e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches, e-liquids).
- Limited culturally appropriate messages in local languages.
- **50.7%** of Congolese adolescents have low knowledge of the dangers of tobacco use and exposure.
- The industry exploits regulatory voids through pervasive advertising, promotional campaigns targeting youth, and the availability of single-stick cigarettes, making them affordable to minors and low-income populations.
- Cessation services are virtually non-existent within the primary healthcare system. Healthcare workers are not trained to help people quit, and nicotine replacement therapies are neither promoted nor accessible.



Tobacco Control
Data Initiative



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Policy Options/Scenarios



Maintain the Status Quo: Continue with current limited enforcement and awareness efforts.

OPTION 1

ADVANTAGES

No new cost implications.

DISADVANTAGES

Continued youth initiation, low awareness, and persistent industry influence.

IMPACT

Low — ineffective in reversing current trends.



Strengthen Enforcement and Enforce Existing Legislation: Fully implement and update Ministerial Orders related to tobacco control.

OPTION 2

ADVANTAGES

Builds on existing structures; increases accountability and compliance.

DISADVANTAGES

Requires inter-ministerial coordination and sustained enforcement.

IMPACT

Moderate — can improve enforcement and awareness outcomes.



Establish a Comprehensive Tobacco Prevention Framework: Adopt a national strategy addressing all stages of prevention (pre-primary to tertiary).

OPTION 3

ADVANTAGES

Comprehensive and aligned with FCTC Articles 6, 8, 11, 12, and 13.

DISADVANTAGES

Requires significant resource mobilization and cross-sectoral collaboration.

IMPACT

High — ensures long-term health and economic gains.



Integrate Tobacco Prevention into Education and Digital Platforms: Promote anti-smoking education and mobile communication campaigns targeting youth.

OPTION 4

ADVANTAGES

High reach, low cost, and youth-centered approach.

DISADVANTAGES

Dependent on partnerships and digital access.

IMPACT

High and Sustainable— shifts social norms and promotes prevention culture.

Key Recommendations: A Four-Part Framework



Conclusion

Tobacco use is a preventable driver of poverty, disease, and death. The DRC has a window of opportunity to act now to protect its current and future generations from the devastating harms of tobacco. By adopting a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy, as well as a coordinated synergy between the Ministries of Health, Finance, Education, and Communication, civil society organizations, teachers, and community leaders, the DRC can save lives, reduce healthcare costs, and foster a healthier, more productive society.





For references and more information on tobacco prevention and awareness in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, visit, <https://drc.tobaccocontroldata.org/en/home/prevention-du-tabagisme-et-sensibilisation/>



Adult Prevalence

Information on current adult prevalence of tobacco consumption by product, gender, age, rural/urban area, level of education, socio-economic status and province.

[Read more](#)



Youth Prevalence

Presentation of primary research results about adolescent tobacco and nicotine use in DRC.

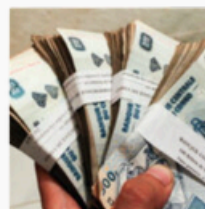
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Legislation

An overview of the country's smoke-free legislation, its history, application and future prospects.

[Read more](#)



Taxation

The share of taxes and the structure of cigarette taxes in the DRC compared with other countries, as well as their evolution over time.

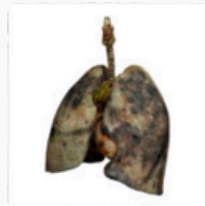
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Industry Interference

Information on the structure of the tobacco market and recommendations for tobacco industry interference in the DRC.

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Morbidity

The health consequences of smoking for smokers and those around them.

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Illicit Trade

Qualitative and quantitative data on the illicit cigarette market in the DRC. This page describes the origins and types of illicit cigarettes sold in the DRC, as well as the importance of illicit products on the national market.

[Read more](#)



Prevention and awareness

This page highlights actionable pathways for the DRC to reduce tobacco and nicotine use and exposure across the population, starting well before initiation.

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New and emerging products

This page examines the prevalence, health effects, and marketing strategies of NENTPs in the DRC. It also provides insights into their impact on public health, regulatory policies, and consumer trends.

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WHO FCTC

This page is designed to equip decision-makers with the essential knowledge and policy tools needed to take effective action against tobacco use, in alignment with the WHO FCTC guidelines.

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