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## Battle for Tobacco Control—The Indian Experience

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Just a decade ago, it would have been inconceivable for an objective observer to imagine that India, in 2003, would be acclaimed as a leader in global tobacco control efforts. Given the fact that India is the second-largest producer of tobacco and had previously valued the revenue- and employment-generating potential of tobacco agriculture and manufacture, it would have been natural to expect that policy-makers would continue to be lukewarm towards national or global efforts to curb tobacco consumption.

Yet, the reality of 2003–2004 is that Indian Parliament enacted a far-reaching anti-tobacco legislation in April 2003, the Indian Government played a prominent role in the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) negotiations (which concluded in March 2003), signed the FCTC in September 2003, ratified it in February 2004 and commenced enforcement of the national tobacco control law in May 2004. Both at home and abroad, Indian state and civil society organizations are now demonstrating a steely resolve to contain the menace of tobacco through a comprehensive control strategy that combines several demand and supply reduction measures.

How did this transformation come about? Many factors have cumulatively contributed to the emergence of this national consensus on tobacco control. These include: increasing awareness of the health, environmental and developmental

damages caused by tobacco; growing global support for tobacco control; WHO's catalytic role in developing policies and programmes for effective action; vigorous advocacy by civil society groups in India; and decisive interventions by the Indian judiciary.

This chapter aims to describe the critical processes and products related to tobacco control policies and programmes in India. The evolution of legislative and regulatory measures, over the past half-century, as well as their current status, are profiled. The key provisions of these measures and their implications for India are discussed. The seminal role of public interest litigation and judicial verdicts is elucidated, and consumer actions to challenge the tobacco industry are illustrated.

Fiscal measures, taken by the government both to tax tobacco and to foster its growth, are elaborated to exemplify the quintessential dilemma that a developing country faces when dealing with the threats and temptations of tobacco. The role of civil society, as a conscience keeper that guides government as well as the

public to make the right choices, is portrayed and the array of activities undertaken by Indian NGOs are profiled. The efforts of several governmental and non-governmental agencies, to promote health education through the mass media, are summarized. The tactics adopted by the tobacco industry in India to obfuscate the truth and dilute or subvert control measures are also catalogued.

This narrative, by its very nature, takes a descriptive form. Evaluation has not been a strong component of programme implementation in the area of tobacco control in India, since the programmes themselves have been sporadic and limited till recently. The coalescence of multiple initiatives into a nationwide programme now appears more likely. The manner in which the Indian experience gathered so far (described in Chapter 6) and the lessons of international experience available from other countries (Chapter 7) should be combined to generate action pathways for the future will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of this report (Chapters 8 and 9).