

Africa new frontline in anti-tobacco fight: activists

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"The cigarette is the single most deadly consumer product ever made," said Ruth Malone, a professor at the University of California

Africa and other developing regions are becoming increasingly significant battlegrounds in the effort to combat the spread of smoking, an anti-smoking campaign group warned on Thursday.

But most countries in sub-Saharan Africa have inadequate monitoring of [tobacco](#) use, according to the authors of the newly reissued "Tobacco Atlas" of global tobacco control efforts and challenges.

Globally, the battle to end the scourge of tobacco is still long.

Smoking claims nearly seven million lives yearly around the world from cancer and other lung diseases, and accounts for about one-in-10 deaths worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

"More than 1.1 billion people are current smokers, while 360 million people use [smokeless tobacco](#)," the authors said in a statement.

The sixth edition of the atlas, co-authored by the American Cancer Society and Vital Strategies, was published to coincide with the opening this week of the World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Cape Town.

"Low and middle income countries represent over 80 percent of [tobacco users](#) and tobacco-related deaths, placing an increased share of tobacco-related costs on those who can least afford it," said the authors.

"A growing proportion of that burden will fall on countries across Africa in the future, if governments do not implement [tobacco control policies](#) now to prevent it."

Research on the tobacco industry, published in peer-reviewed journals, has portrayed a decades-long strategy by the industry to defend itself against health campaigners.

Investigators say tactics have included casting doubt on the scientific evidence of the perils of smoking, promoting brands through product placement in movies and aggressively marketing tobacco in low and middle-income countries where smoking laws are weak.

Even as the percentage of adults who smoke has dropped in rich nations and plateaued in some emerging ones, the total number of smokers keeps climbing, driven by an expanding global population and more people in poor countries lighting up.

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