

Tobacco-use study reveals frightening data

17 August 2012 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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Singapore: The world's largest tobacco use survey, titled 'The Global Adult Tobacco Survey', which has been published in The Lancet, underscores the enormity of the global tobacco epidemic in low and middle-income countries that are being targeted by the tobacco industry. The research was funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies' Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Brazilian and Indian governments.

The study demonstrated how quickly the burden of tobacco use is moving to low and middle-income countries and is a wake-up call for these countries to act now and address a crisis they can ill afford.

The survey was conducted in 14 low and middle-income countries between 2008-10 and provides the most comprehensive

information to date on the tobacco epidemic in countries where it is growing most rapidly. The study also includes data from the US and the UK for comparison purposes.

In just these 16 countries, the study finds there are 852 million tobacco users, including 661 million smokers and 247 million smokeless tobacco users. The study also reveals that in the 14 low and middle-income countries surveyed, nearly half of all men (49 percent) use tobacco. Moreover, women are starting to smoke as early as men, indicating the harmful impact of tobacco marketing aimed at women and girls.

The percentages of smokers, who have quit are highest in the US, the UK, Brazil and Uruguay, where tobacco control policies are strongest. In contrast, nations such as China, India, Russia and Bangladesh are paying the price for inaction. China has the most tobacco users (300.8 million), followed by India (274.9 million). Russia has the highest smoking rate among men (60.2 percent). India and Bangladesh face unique risks because of high rates of smokeless tobacco use, with these two countries having a combined 94 percent of the smokeless tobacco users in the survey.