

Tobacco smokers reduce by 29m globally - report

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KAMPALA. As the world marks the World No Tobacco Day, a new report released by the World Health Organisation yesterday shows that the total number of smokers has decreased by 29 million since 2000.

Globally, the total number of tobacco smokers declined to 1.1 billion in 2016 from 1.14 billion, rendering the change insufficient to meet the target of protecting people from cardiovascular and non-communicable diseases by 30 per cent.

The report titled "WHO global report on trends in the prevalence on tobacco smoking," shows that the prevalence of tobacco use in high income countries decreased from 33.6 per cent in 2000 to 24.6 per cent in 2015, representing 9 per

cent decline. The Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of Newcastle in Australia, Prof Kevin Hall, attributed the decrease to the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

FCTC, according to the report, saw member states undertake many intentions such as monitoring tobacco use, developing prevention policies, enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship and raising taxes

2 million

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on tobacco. However, the report shows that the trends in African and East Mediterranean regions are stagnant, where "only one region, America, is on track to reach the 2025 target of a 30 per cent reduction among both males and females."

According to the report, most people start smoking between 15 and 24 years.

"The adult surveys show that the first big influx of smokers occurs among people aged 15-24 years, with modest additions to the population of smokers thereafter," the report adds.

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On Monday, Dr David Basangwa, the executive director to Butabika National Referral Hospital,

expressed concern that smoking was one of the factors triggering mental illness among their patients, majority of whom are university students.

According to the report, Uganda has about 1.1 million daily smokers, of whom one million are males.

In an interview yesterday, Dr Hafsa Lukwata, a senior medical officer in the mental health division, said the number of daily smokers has declined from 1.5 million in 2013 to the current one million, which she says shows good progress.

She added that the Tobacco Control Act has not been well implemented.

"The law has not been enforced because we are still working on the guidelines but we continue to give information to the public about the dangers of tobacco smoking," she said.