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Rationale for USAID Tobacco Policy

Tobacco use results in a tremendous health burden worldwide, and is a growing problem in transitional countries and the developing world. There are 1.1 billion smokers in the world today, and it is estimated that the number will grow to 1.6 billion by the year 2025, mostly because of demographic shifts, increased incomes, and increased smoking by women. By 2025, 85 percent of all smokers will be in developing countries. Currently, tobacco causes between 3 and 4 million deaths annually, a figure that could rise to 10 million deaths annually by the year 2020. The economic losses from the medical burden and the years of life lost to morbidity as a result of tobacco consumption are staggering. It is estimated that the world tobacco market produces an annual global loss of \$200 billion.

In response to this enormous developmental problem, articulation and implementation of tobacco policies are already underway both nationally and internationally. The Department of Health and Human Services maintains a strong position on the link between tobacco use and adverse health outcomes and is implementing its policies through research, advocacy, and health promotion activities. The Department of State has issued a cable detailing the U.S. position on tobacco, including exports. While addressing health concerns, the cable does not address the transition from tobacco as a cash crop.

Internationally, USAID's key partners have already taken strong anti-tobacco positions. For example, the World Bank has had a formal tobacco policy since 1991; the policy specifies that anti-tobacco activities be included in sector work, policy dialogue, and lending operations, specifying that loans will not be provided for tobacco production, processing, imports or marketing. Under the leadership of its new Director-General, the World Health Organization has launched a major anti-tobacco initiative which addresses issues in the full life-cycle of tobacco use including the impact of smoking during pregnancy and of environmental tobacco smoke exposure on children's health.

With this USAID Policy on Tobacco, the Agency joins the national and international communities in an effort to address the negative health effects and development problems exacerbated by tobacco growth and consumption.