



The government of Lebanon recently enforced its tobacco control law adopted last year, banning smoking in all public places, including cafés and restaurants. A grace period was given by the government for the implementation of the law, coupled with mass media campaigns to raise awareness and pave the way for its proper implementation.

By implementing this law, Lebanon has made an important leap in the area of tobacco control however concerns about the tobacco industry's tireless tactics and plans to intercept its implementation persist.

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What were the activities of the tobacco industry in other countries?

In other countries where smoke-free policies were implemented, the tobacco industry and its allies attempted to deter the work being done as well as give rise to false arguments during the various stages of the development and implementation of such policies. Their efforts were vigorous; they stopped work, postponed and weakened implementation. Moreover, the tobacco industry continues to spread false arguments, such as the risk of economic losses; however such arguments and claims come as no surprise and must be thwarted.

How were the activities of the tobacco industry thwarted?

Countries from around the world that have implemented smoking bans have faced and countered such arguments using scientific evidence. In New York, for instance, tobacco control opponents insisted that such policies harm small outlets however the reverse proved to be true. Following the implementation of such laws, a survey conducted in New York City in 2004 showed that 96% of New Yorkers continued to consume the same amount of food in restaurants as before. In fact, food consumption and revenues increased despite the fact that the City's restaurants and cafes all complied with the law. Similar studies conducted in other countries showed the same results.

Hence, the enforcement of smoking bans in public places, driven by the increasing prevalence of devastating diseases such as cancer and heart disease, carries no negative impact on cafés or restaurants.

Do smoking bans reduce tobacco use and save lives?

With the implementation of this law, it is expected that the rates of tobacco use in Lebanon will significantly decrease, as was the case in various other countries, such as the United States, where a 5% to 20% decrease was seen in cigarette smoking rates in States that implemented comprehensive laws to ban tobacco use.

The implementation of smoke-free policies has yielded many benefits in all implementing countries. For instance, in public places in Ireland, the level of nicotine concentration in the air dropped by 83%; also, smokers wanting to quit benefit tremendously from the implementation of smoke-free laws. And because smoking bans in workplaces reduce smoking prevalence by 4%, on the whole, the implementation of such policies in various industrial countries has led to a 29% decrease in overall consumption.

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