

## **Do People Restrict Smoking in Public Places? Lessons Learnt from Four Districts in Bangladesh**

**Rumana Haque  
Salina Siddiqua  
S. M Abdullah**

***Abstract:** This paper analyses the knowledge and attitude of people regarding smoking restriction in public places under the Tobacco Control Act-2005, identifies the barriers in making public places smoke free, and explores the ways to overcome those barriers. A cross sectional household survey and in-depth interviews of key informants were employed to collect data. A total of 908 households and 27 key informants were interviewed in four districts, namely Gazipur, Naranganj, Meherpur and Jhinaidah. The findings of the study suggest that there remains a knowledge gap among the people with regard to secondhand smoking and the Tobacco Control Act of the country. Though tobacco use is prohibited at any public place under the law, more than fifty percent of the surveyed respondents do not have any idea about 'public place', while 38% respondents knew about the penalty for smoking at public places. Only 12.5 % people among all respondents believed that the law is being implemented properly. Hence we suggest strengthening law enforcement committees for proper implementation of the Act.*

### **1. Background:**

Taking the burden of approximately five million deaths per year, tobacco is considered as the second major risk factor for deaths in the world. Most of these deaths occur in low income countries. Almost thirty two percent people of Bangladesh live below the poverty line (HIES, 2010). As a result, tobacco-related diseases such as cancer, and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases have already appeared as major public health problems in this country. Bangladesh is one of the high tobacco producing and consuming countries. It was the world's 18th leading tobacco producer in 1994 and continues to be the fourth largest producer of cigarettes in the region (MOHFW, 2007). The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (2009) suggests that 44.7% (21.2 million) of men, 1.5% (0.7 million) of women and 23% overall (21.9 million) adults in Bangladesh currently smoke tobacco in the form of *bidi* and cigarette. Tobacco consumption poses a serious threat to the health and overall economic development of the nation. Although other causes of death still dominate, tobacco use contributes a substantial amount to the overall burden of diseases and death. Furthermore, it has clear and significant immediate negative effects on the welfare of poor families, when scarce resources that could be used for food are instead spent on tobacco.

---

**Rumana Haque, PhD**, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka.

**Salina Siddiqua**, Lecturer, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka.

**S. M Abdullah**, Lecturer, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka.