Zambia Project titles: 1) Taxing Tobacco Products, and 2) The Political Economy of Tobacco Farming

**The research:** The Centre for Primary Care Research at the University of Zambia (UNZA) is working closely with ACS’s EHPR team and other key partners to generate evidence about the economics of tobacco in Zambia. The first project, with the ITC Zambia Project (University of Waterloo), tackles tobacco taxation and examines whether prices are affecting tobacco consumption. The results suggest that price has a sizeable effect on consumption. As prices increase, consumption decreases. This bodes well for policy to increase tobacco taxes for public health gains.

The research also demonstrates that some Zambian smokers will substitute “down” to cheaper roll-your-own tobacco from the informal market, which will require a more comprehensive tax policy. In the second project, the team is evaluating the economic livelihoods of farmers and finds that most smallholder farmers are operating at a loss. This directly contradicts the narrative of the tobacco industry, which suggests prosperity. Ongoing research is examining closely the livelihoods of farmers who have stopped growing tobacco or are making a shift away. The UNZA team is implementing these projects in collaboration with strong advocacy support from organizations supporting tobacco control. Moreover, the team continues to consult closely with the health, finance and agriculture ministries to determine what types of analysis they require to consider tobacco taxation and tobacco farming policies.

**The context:** The Government of Zambia is currently considering new comprehensive legislation that is likely to include components of tobacco taxation and provisions to help tobacco farmers find alternative livelihoods. This research is timely for providing the government with evidence about the effect of price on consumption, including product substitution, and to help them understand the livelihoods of tobacco farmers and the possibilities for viable economic alternatives.

**For more information:**

View this video from the Prevent20 Coalition: Stop youth smoking: raise tobacco taxes.

Read this report to learn more about tobacco farming in Zambia

Read this article to learn more how availability of cheap roll-your-own tobacco impacts tobacco use in Zambia.

**Message for cancer organizations:**

_Cancer organizations can work to promote higher tobacco taxes to keep youth tobacco-free and to encourage adult smokers to quit. Lower-income countries like Zambia are facing enormous increases in youth tobacco use prevalence. Not too long ago, Zambia was a country with single-digit prevalence, but now, more than a quarter of Zambian youth report using tobacco. In the not-too-distant future, this will contribute to rapidly rising rates of chronic diseases like cancer._

_Cancer organizations can also disseminate reliable information about tobacco farming. The tobacco industry continues to spread the false narrative of prosperity for farmers, which strong voices need to correct._

_These are messages that governments and the public need to hear:_

1) Tobacco taxes are healthy taxes!  
2) Tobacco farming is not lucrative for smallholder farmers and government needs to help them find viable alternatives.