

*By Jeje Muhinde;*

The number of tobacco users has seen a downward trend, and governments have been urged to invest in their population to quit smoking, World Health Organization (WHO) says.

The fourth WHO global tobacco trends report released on Tuesday shows that tobacco users trends dropped by 200 million globally compared to 1.32 billion in 2015.

WHO say, this number is expected to drop to 1.27 billion by 2025 and millions of lives have been saved by effective and comprehensive tobacco control policies under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and MPOWER – a great achievement in the fight against the tobacco epidemic

“It is very encouraging to see fewer people using tobacco each year, and more countries on track to meet global targets,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General in a statement.

“We still have a long way to go, and tobacco companies will continue to use every trick in the book to defend the gigantic profits they make from peddling their deadly wares. We encourage all countries to make better use of the many effective tools available for helping people to quit, and saving lives.”

The report also urges countries to accelerate implementation of the measures outlined in the WHO FCTC in an effort to further reduce the number of people at risk of becoming ill and dying from a tobacco-related disease.

“It is clear that tobacco control is effective, and we have a moral obligation to our people to move aggressively in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,” says Dr Ruediger Krech, Director of WHO Department of Health Promotion.

“We are seeing great progress in many countries, which is the result of implementing tobacco control measures that are in line with the WHO FCTC, but this success is fragile. We still need to push ahead.”

A new WHO Global Investment Case for Tobacco Cessation, highlights that investing US\$ 1.68 per capita each year in evidence-based cessation interventions such as brief advice, national toll-free quit lines, and SMS-based cessation support, could help 152 million tobacco users successfully quit by 2030, saving millions of lives

and contributing to countries' long-term economic growth.

Key findings of the WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000–2025 shows that in 2020, 22.3% of the global population used tobacco, 36.7% of all men and 7.8% of the world's women.

Currently, 60 countries are on track to achieve the tobacco use reduction target by 2025. Since the last report two years ago, two other regions – the African and South-East Asian regions – have now joined the Americas region on-track to achieve a 30% reduction.

Children: Approximately 38 million children (aged 13-15) currently use tobacco (13 million girls and 25 million boys). In most countries it is illegal for minors to purchase tobacco products. The goal is to achieve zero child tobacco users.

The number of women using tobacco in 2020 was 231 million. The age group with the highest prevalence rate among women for tobacco use is 55-64.

However, the African region trend shows the lowest average rate of tobacco use at 10% in 2020, down from 15% in 2010.