# ARI calls for district-level smoking cessation services across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, 6 February, 2025: Alternative Research Initiative (ARI) and its partners have urged the federal and provincial governments to prioritize the provision of district-level smoking cessation services across Pakistan to combat the growing tobacco epidemic.

“Tobacco use is both a major health issue and a socio-economic crisis,” said Arshad Ali Syed, Executive Director of ARI. He called for a comprehensive, accessible, and sustainable approach to help smokers quit. “District-level smoking cessation services are a critical step in this direction.”

In this regard, he added that smoking cessation services may be integrated into existing primary healthcare systems to ensure accessibility for all citizens. Additionally, healthcare workers at the district level should be trained to provide evidence-based cessation support, including behavioral counseling and pharmacological interventions. These measures should be backed by nationwide campaigns to raise awareness about the availability of cessation services and a robust system to monitor the effectiveness of these services.

He also called for reviewing and adopting the United Kingdom’s model of smoking cessation services, which has significantly reduced smoking rates over the past two decades. The UK’s National Health Service (NHS) provides free, evidence-based cessation support, including counseling, nicotine replacement therapy, and access to medications like varenicline and bupropion. The local stop smoking service across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have advisers to support them in their journey to quit. This includes evaluating the smoking habit, the urge to quit, and the breath test to gauge the level of carbon monoxide – a poisonous gas in cigarette smoke – in the smoker’s body.

“The UK’s approach demonstrates that investing in smoking cessation services yields substantial returns in terms of public health and economic savings,” said Arshad. “By establishing similar services at the district level in Pakistan, we can save lives, reduce healthcare costs, and create a healthier future for our citizens.”

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# Alternative Research Initiative (ARI)

ARI provides research-based solutions in social fields, including health, education, governance, culture, etc. in Pakistan. Established in 2018, ARI offers analytical research and outreach services, identifying and analyzing social issues, to provide long-term practical innovative solutions, both for public and private sectors. Over the last two years, ARI has conducted countrywide surveys and research studies on various issues of health.

# Our work

ARI is working on ending combustible smoking in a generation in Pakistan. While remaining committed to and supporting tobacco control efforts in Pakistan, especially Article 14 of FCTC, ARI serves as a platform for advocating and promoting all innovative solutions for ending smoking whether counseling, NRTs, or harm reduction.