



## CRES

# Curbing tobacco use through research and advocacy

*Consortium pour la Recherche Économique et Sociale* (CRES) successfully engaged in research and outreach activities, both in Senegal and across West Africa, by focusing on reforms to tobacco taxation.

**SETTING THE SCENE** —Smoking is the largest preventable epidemic worldwide, placing far ahead of AIDS and malaria in terms of mortalities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco use kills over six million people annually, most of them in less developed countries. Beyond the health risks, there are also clear economic and social repercussions.

In West Africa tobacco taxation is considered the measure most effective to curb tobacco consumption. However, some challenges that countries such as Senegal face include a lack of national data on tobacco taxation as well as a lack of synergy between research, advocacy and policymaking decisions on tobacco control. Until 2013, Senegal did not have a law on tobacco aside from the *WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control*, which it ratified in 2005. This led CRES to take action and engage in tobacco control in West Africa.

**WHAT CRES DID** —Consortium pour la Recherche Économique et Sociale (CRES) was created in 2004 and works to build research and analysis capacity in economics and the social sciences, as well as to inform decision-making on social and economic questions. Since 2010, CRES has engaged in research and outreach

activities related to tobacco control, aiming to convince decision-makers to increase the tax on tobacco products. These efforts initially sought to change public policies on tobacco in Senegal, but later expanded to include additional West African countries.

One of CRES' directed efforts took place in Touba, Senegal - the country's second largest city hosting one of its most religious communities. Since the 1970s, Touba has been a smoke-free city and the consumption of tobacco is prohibited by religious authorities. However, as there is no legal backing for this, offenders cannot be prosecuted. In an effort to help the community continue its tobacco control efforts, CRES set out to provide a legal basis for this unofficial ban.

CRES established a team of lawyers and activists who developed a proposed Bill on the production, consumption and distribution of tobacco, which would also provide a legal basis for the prohibition of smoking in certain areas such as the city of Touba. In order to influence decision-makers, CRES worked closely with experts from the Ministry of Health. The organization also helped to establish a strong alliance of civil society members, who led a campaign of advocacy and lobbying.



These efforts led to the development of a draft law on tobacco adopted by the Council of Ministers, the production of 15 national research reports on tobacco taxation in the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional synthesis and a technical document for the authorities on the new regulations. Communications surrounding this project, including the dissemination of research results, led to a change in perceptions among national and regional authorities and received great support from civil society.

**THE OUTCOME** —This Bill, entitled *Projet de loi relatif à la fabrication, au conditionnement, à l'étiquetage, à la vente, et à l'usage du tabac* was adopted by the government of Senegal in July 2013. However, the ban on smoking was not included in all anticipated areas. In order to address this, CRES mobilized the religious authorities of Touba, civil society and parliamentarians to propose amendments to the text. These stakeholders are now committed to defending these amendments at a consideration of the Bill in the National Assembly in coming months.

CRES has since expanded its work on curbing tobacco use to include target populations in the 15 countries of ECOWAS. Whereas previous studies have been limited to the national level, CRES successfully engaged in the topic across West Africa, providing reliable and current data. CRES presented these findings at a conference in November 2012 that brought together representatives of the 15 countries, the two West African regional economic organizations (WAEMU<sup>1</sup> and ECOWAS) and organizations active in the field of health. CRES strongly recommended a reform on the taxation of tobacco products, and this is now being considered by the authorities of ECOWAS as well as experts of its member countries. This decision will have a major impact on the well-being of the countries' populations, conceivably reducing the prevalence of morbidity, mortality and public health costs due to tobacco use and related diseases.

<sup>1</sup> West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) comprises 8 countries of the region using the same currency, the CFA Franc. These 8 countries are also members of ECOWAS.

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For more information on CRES visit [www.cres-sn.org](http://www.cres-sn.org)

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