

## **Tobacco and the Environment**

### Key Messages for Youth and Young Adult Advocates

#### **Key Message #1: Tobacco growing and production has a devastating impact on the environment.**

- Each year, approximately 25.6 million pounds of pesticides are used on tobacco crops. Many of these chemicals are known to cause cancer and birth defects as well pesticides that are potent nerve toxins.
- Sixteen applications of pesticides are applied during the three-month period before tobacco seedlings are transplanted to the field.
- The clearing of land to be used for tobacco farming as well as the curing of tobacco contributes greatly to destruction of forests throughout the world.
- Roughly 5% of deforestation in all of Africa is caused by tobacco production. In Malawi, a small African country that produces a large amount of tobacco sold in American cigarettes, tobacco production is responsible for 26% of deforestation.
- Deforestation caused from tobacco production leads to ecological destruction. For example, tree removal leads to flooding. With flooding comes loss of soil nutrients and natural habitats. With drastic loss of trees comes an increase in harmful gases that leads to global warming.
- One in eight trees in the world are cut down to clear lands for tobacco growing or used to cure tobacco.
- 7.8 pounds of wood is needed to cure one pound of tobacco.
- Three hundred cigarettes are produced from one tree. That is the equivalent of 15 packs of cigarettes.
- Manufacturing of tobacco results in sizable amounts of liquid, solid, and airborne waste. In one year, over 1.3 million pounds of toxic chemicals were reported disposed of or released from tobacco facilities.

#### **Key Message #2: Tobacco use is responsible for polluting the air.**

- Tobacco smoke contains approximately 7,000 chemicals; at least 250 are known to be harmful. These chemicals include climate-warming carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxides. Burned tobacco products release these chemicals into the environment.
- The California Environmental Protection Agency has identified secondhand tobacco smoke as an airborne toxic substance.
- Each year in California, tobacco smoke is responsible for the release of 40 tons of nicotine, 365 tons of breathed in particulate matter, and 1900 tons of carbon monoxide into the environment.
- Globally, combustible tobacco products are responsible for an estimated one million fires per year. In the US, cigarettes cause approximately 100,000 fires. The toxins caused by these fires contribute to poor air quality and high levels of particulate matter in the air.

### **Key Message #3: All tobacco waste is damaging to the environment.**

- Cigarette filters are not safe and are not biodegradable. Filters are made of cellulose acetate, which is photodegradable but not biodegradable. The sun eventually breaks the filter into smaller pieces in soil or water but the material never disappears.
- The filters trap the toxins from the tobacco such as arsenic. When littered into the environment, all the toxic chemicals are released.
- Cigarette butts and other tobacco product waste are the most common items picked up in urban and beach cleanups worldwide.
- Littered cigarette butts have been found in the stomachs of fish, birds, whales, marine animals, and land animals.
- E-cigarette waste consists of microplastics, metals, nicotine, and combustible lithium ion batteries. Liquid nicotine is classified as hazardous waste by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- E-cigarette litter, such as discarded pods, have residue of e-liquids, including nicotine and other toxic chemicals. The pods leak these chemicals into the soil, waterways, and can be ingested by animals.

