

# **Tobacco Control Politics in Bangladesh**

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**Dissertation submitted as partial fulfilment of Master of Arts in  
Governance and Development at the Institute of Development Studies,  
University of Sussex**

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**Date of Submission**

**August 30, 2016**

Despite having a set of well-intended tobacco control policies since 2003, the production and consumption of tobacco in Bangladesh have increased. This paper explains why the tobacco control policies in Bangladesh failed to deliver their intended outcomes. Using a combined framework of political economy and policy implementation analysis, this study examines the information collected from primary and secondary sources. Based on the findings, the paper argues that the game of interests among the stakeholders have made the state institutions inactive and ineffective. Lack of political commitment and politics of interests have failed the implementation and skewed the outcome.

## Acronyms

ADHUNIK	Amra Dhumpan Nibaron Kori
BAT	British American Tobacco Ltd.
BATA	Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance
BCS	Bangladesh Cancer Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DCS	District Civil Surgeon
DDC	District Development Committee
DM	District Magistrate
DO	Demi-official
DT	Dhaka Tribune
DTFC	District Task Force Committee
FCTC	Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
GATS	Global Adult Tobacco Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GTE	Global Tobacco Epidemic
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
ITCEP	International Tobacco Control Evaluation Project
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture

MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHFP	Ministry of Health and Family Planning
MoI	Ministry of Information
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MoLPA	Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
MPOWER	Monitoring, Protection, Warning, Enforce, Raising
NBR	National Board of Revenue
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NTCC	National Tobacco Control Cell
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PIA	Policy Implementation Analysis
TA	Tobacco Atlas
TIW	Tobacco Industries Watch
The Union	The Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WBB Trust	Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust
WHO	World Health Organisation

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## **Tobacco Control Politics in Bangladesh**

### **Preface: A Puzzle**

After signing an international agreement on tobacco control in 2003, Bangladesh enacted a set of policies to control tobacco. The main objectives of these policies were to cease the cultivation and production of tobacco, to reduce the consumption of tobacco products and to improve public health. Ironically, studies show that in the last twelve years since the policies have taken place, the cultivation, production, and consumption of tobacco have increased. This dissertation asks the question: why did the tobacco control policies in Bangladesh fail to achieve their intended outcomes?

Civil Society Organisations welcomed Government intervention in the tobacco market. The Parliament passed an anti-tobacco Act in 2005 and the Government immediately enacted the Rules to execute the Act. World Health Organisation described the policies as good, well-intended and fairly tough on tobacco market. People were happy to see the anti-smoking laws and there were no obvious protests against these measures and actions. No reports of major issues came up in this period. The Government continued to show their good intention by amending the laws and making them tougher for tobacco businesses. Yet, the policies failed to achieve the intended targets.

In this dissertation, I attempt to explain this puzzle by drawing on primary and secondary evidence and using a combined framework of political economy and policy implementation analysis. Focusing on the analysis of country-level stakeholders and their interests, this study finds that the politics of interests and the institutions in implementation process have skewed the outcomes.

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background of tobacco control in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh started to grow tobacco as a food crop in the 1960s. After the country's liberation, the British American Tobacco (BAT) company financed the extensive cultivation of tobacco as an industrial smoking product in the 1970s, especially in the northern part of Bangladesh (Hassan *et al.*, 2015 p. 91). The Government termed tobacco a 'cash crop' and due to its profitability, massive production took place in various parts of Bangladesh. The country soon became one of the leading tobacco producers in the world around the 1990s.

Being one of the most populated countries in the world, the continuous increase of tobacco consumption contributed to the rapid growth of the market and industrialisation of tobacco in Bangladesh (Efroymson & Ahmed, 2003, p. 15-16).

The history of tobacco control attempts in Bangladesh is recent. A few civil society organisations (CSOs) namely Amran Dhumpan Nibaron Kori (ADHUNIK), Bangladesh Cancer Society (BCS) and Non-smokers' Forum began to advocate for anti-smoking measures in the 1980s. They were not very successful until Bangladesh restored democracy in 1991. In 1999 a High Court verdict on the Voyage of Discovery Case<sup>1</sup> asked the Government to stop the aggressive marketing activities of the BAT in Bangladesh (World Bank, 1999). A more concerted effort for tobacco control especially from the CSOs was visible in the following years.

Meanwhile in the 1980s and the 1990s tobacco control advocacy was gaining momentum globally (Lopez *et al.*, 1994 p. 243). Many global and international organisations mainly led by World Health Organisation (WHO) started to advocate for strong tobacco control policy measures. These organisations produced evidence on how tobacco was a massive health issue causing millions of premature human deaths across the globe (Cairney *et. al.*, 2012, p. 3). The World Bank (WB) also played a crucial role in anti-tobacco movement especially by focusing on tobacco taxes, affordability and illicit trade of tobacco products (World Bank, 2016). Eventually, WHO came up with the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC<sup>2</sup>) in 2003. Having tobacco as one of the leading causes of premature deaths, Bangladesh was the first country signed and ratified the Convention in 2004 (Ash, 2016; GATS, 2009; WHO, 2008: p. 26). This triggered government intervention in the tobacco market.

According to 2009 Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS), 43.5% of people aged 15 years and above in Bangladesh (i.e. 40.1 million approximately) used to consume tobacco in some form or other. WHO reported that 57,000 people die every year out of tobacco-related diseases and another 200,000 get paralysed in Bangladesh (NTCC, 2009). The Government

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<sup>1</sup> The case involved the use of a touring luxury yacht by British American Tobacco (BAT) to advertise its cigarettes. Invoking the right to life and liberty guaranteed by the Constitution of Bangladesh, the petitioner urged the court to declare advertisement of tobacco products illegal. In its opinion, the Court recognised the harms of smoking and agreed with petitioners that the BAT yacht constituted an “advertisement” and that, more broadly, the use of any advertisement for cigarettes without appropriate health warnings offended the constitutional right to life. For more details, please visit: <http://www.tobaccocontrollaws.org/litigation/decisions/bd-20000207-islam,-et-al.-v.-bangladesh> (accessed on July 26, 2016)

<sup>2</sup> The main aim of FCTC is to control tobacco through legislations and policies across the countries. 168 countries have signed this Convention so far.

of Bangladesh (GOB) earns significant revenue<sup>3</sup> by exporting tobacco leaves as well as by taxing tobacco process and consumption (Barkat, 2013 p. 22). About 200,000 people are employed in small, medium and national tobacco companies (Barkat, 2013 p. 15) and a lot of farmers are engaged in farming tobacco as their only winter crop (Hossain *et al.*, 2013 p. 128).

Bangladesh enacted ‘Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act, 2005’ (GOB, 2014) in order to control tobacco production as well as to reduce its consumption. The Government immediately prepared National Policy and Plan of Action for Tobacco Control (GOB, 2006) and established a separate public organisation ‘National Tobacco Control Cell’ (NTCC) in 2007 to lead and coordinate the implementation processes. The Government also created a national committee and committees at the district and sub-district levels to oversee the tobacco control policy implementation. CSOs and anti-smoking activists welcomed the firm intention of the Government to control tobacco (Hasib, 2014; Sujon, 2013).

Twelve years have passed since the policies including the legislation and the Rules took place to control tobacco. The main objectives of these policies stated in the National Policy and Plan of Action in 2006 were: (i) to reduce tobacco consumption, (ii) to promote cessation of tobacco cultivation (iii) to protect non-smokers from exposure to second-hand smoking, and (iv) to prevent people from the devastating consequences of tobacco usage (GOB, 2006, p. 7-8). The target was to achieve a decrease in per capita tobacco consumption at least by 1% every next year (GOB, 2006, p. 8) and to create a tobacco-free Bangladesh<sup>4</sup> by 2040.

According to WHO’s Global Tobacco Epidemic (GTE) Report (2015), in the last twelve years, Bangladesh has achieved several targets. First, due to persistent health warnings on tobacco packages, people have become more aware of the health hazards of smoking. Second, the ban on the promotion and advertisement of tobacco products through mainstream means (such as print and electronic media, billboards, and public announcements) has been successfully implemented (Tobacco Atlas, 2016; WBB, 2015). Third, the Government has increased the revenue generation through taxing on smoking products namely cigarettes and bidis. Finally, the policies have legitimised the grounds of raising taxes on tobacco process

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<sup>3</sup> According to the annual revenue report of the Ministry of Finance, in the financial year of 2015-16, the Government earned more than 14 thousand crores Bangladeshi Taka only from smoking products.

<sup>4</sup> According to WHO’s definition, tobacco-free world means to have the world where only less than 5% of adult people (aged 15 years or more) shall consume tobacco. As a signatory of FCTC, Bangladesh aims to be a tobacco-free by 2040.



and products, as well as to take control over cultivation and marketing. However, these achievements were not enough to fulfill the objectives of the policies.

Several studies found that the consumption of tobacco has increased in this period. One study conducted in 2010 by the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITCEP) revealed that 2.5 million more Bangladeshi people were smoking in 2009 than in 2005. The report gave two possible explanations for this result, namely the increase of population and the fact that people find it difficult to quit smoking. Its 2011 report claimed that the tobacco control Act does not effectively protect the people of Bangladesh from the harms of tobacco use and exposure as required by Article 8 of the FCTC (ITCEP, 2016, p. 3). The Tobacco Atlas survey in 2013 revealed that the percentage of smoking adult population (aged 15 or above) in Bangladesh is 46.4% which is a clear increase than the percentage 46.2 that GATS found in 2009. Human Development Research Centre (HDRC) study also recorded the highest percentage of tobacco consumption (smoking and smokeless) in Bangladesh in 2013 (Shoeb, 2013).

Studies also show that the demand for tobacco products is also on the rise since 2003. Barkat *et al.*, (2012) and Nargis *et al.*, (2016) show that the demand for tobacco products increases with the increased per capita income in Bangladesh. The supply of tobacco products and the cultivation of tobacco have also increased in this period. A survey conducted by Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids revealed that tobacco consumption in Bangladesh sharply rose in recent years, with cigarette sales going up by 40% and tobacco use in the form of bidi<sup>5</sup> increased by 80% between 1997 and 2010 (Shoeb, 2013). The area of land used for cultivating tobacco also rapidly increased. According to the statistics of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), tobacco was cultivated in 70,000 hectares of land in the 2012-2013 farming season while it grew to 108,000 hectares in 2013-2014 (Roy & Zakaria, 2015; Masud, 2015).

The puzzle is, despite having policies including the legislation in place, why did the country fail to implement the policies in the way they were intended to? Clearly, the answers lay in governance issues surrounding implementation. In the following section, I present a short account of the existing literature that explores some of the potential explanations for this puzzle.

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<sup>5</sup>Bidi is a form of filter-less cigar which is made of dry and not-very-processed tobacco. To know more please visit <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beedi>

## 1.2 What does the existing literature say?

The global views of tobacco control mainly focused on the production and consumption of tobacco and the issues of public health generated by it. International organisations mainly led by WHO and The Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases (known as The Union) have studied the health hazards of first and second-hand tobacco consumptions, while other studies including the ones conducted by the WB have concentrated on the market and economy of tobacco.

Mackay and Croftont (1996) analysed the trends of tobacco consumption and control measures in developing nations and found that compared to developed countries, more men and fewer women were smoking in developing countries, but smoking in women and girls was increasing. They also discovered that due to strict laws and policies to control tobacco in high-income developed countries, transnational tobacco companies were struggling to continue their profits, and were moving their businesses toward low-income developing countries. This shift of business of multinational tobacco companies is one of the influencing global factors that caused an increase in the cultivation and production of tobacco in countries like Bangladesh. However, this does not explain the whole situation.

Cairney *et al.* (2012) studied the origins and history of tobacco as well as the politics of power and transfers of tobacco control governance in recent times across the countries. Based on their review of literature and observations, they argue that it is mainly the national politics around tobacco production and processing that shapes the policy outcome in developing countries. They also suggested that consideration of how policy gets transferred in a country is crucial to gain the full understanding of the scenario in a developing country, and noted that tobacco control might be moving more towards global governance in which domestic policies of countries were supplemented by international agreements. In the case of Bangladesh, this transfer of policies, as mentioned in the previous section, happened through FCTC and, later got translated into other legal and institutional measures.

Bump *et al.* (2009) reviewed the literature of tobacco control in low and middle-income countries and came up with four major conclusions. *First*, only 16 out of 454 studies of tobacco control measures have applied a political economy approach as an analytical methodology. *Second*, the few papers that used the term “political economy” neither explicitly conduct this kind of analysis nor directly consider political strategies for advancing tobacco control. *Third*, translating the FCTC in reducing the use of tobacco and defining the

appropriate political strategies for tobacco control require national-level political economy analyses. *Fourth*, the present and past of tobacco control are well documented, but analyses of future scenarios have mostly focused on projections of health consequences and smoking trends, and most of these analyses do not address political and governance strategies to control tobacco in low and middle-income countries. It shows the significance of studying the political economy of tobacco in Bangladesh from the perspectives of politics and governance.

In Bangladesh, Efroymson and Ahmed (2003) traced the tobacco control measures before FCTC and noted the need for creating political will and agenda for tobacco control. They also found that tobacco companies were strong forces in Bangladesh and it would be difficult to maintain a spotlight on tobacco in the face of so many competing causes of death and illness including floods and cyclones. Based on their findings, they claim that existing tobacco control laws (mainly anti-smoking) were not strong enough to cease the aggressive promotion of tobacco companies and products. They suggested creating a strong alliance among state and non-state forums since at that time only a few CSOs namely Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance (BATA) and World for a Better Bangladesh (WBB) Trust were advocating for Government intervention in the tobacco market. Government intervention happened and Bangladesh now has a set of anti-tobacco policies and a fairly strong alliance to combat the aggression of tobacco companies, but the expected results have not been achieved. Why?

A number of studies have mainly focused the economic aspects of tobacco in Bangladesh namely the tax and price, agriculture, poverty, employment and the market. As an active observer, the WB analyses tobacco control in Bangladesh from an economic perspective in 2004, 2008 and 2013 and identifies raising taxes as the most effective way to reduce tobacco use and single-most cost-effective Government intervention (World Bank, 2013). The HDRC studies on tobacco tax and economics led by Barkat (2013) and Barkat *et al.* (2012) explore the structure of tobacco taxes and prices, government interventions, tobacco farming and productions, employment, revenue and the demand for tobacco products. These studies also identify the tax increase as the most effective way to reduce the demand, and find that the existing tax structure and administration are weak to enforce high tax and excise on the tobacco products and companies. Barkat *et al.* (2008) have studied the economy of tobacco farming through a political economy framework and have found that tobacco companies influence the farmers to increase the cultivation of tobacco. Considering the findings of the study, they have observed that there is a need for an alternative to tobacco farming which the Government fails to deliver.

In order to assess the progress of tobacco control among its member countries, WHO prepared its own analytical framework called MPOWER. MPOWER stands for **M**onitoring of tobacco use and prevention policies, **P**rotection of people from tobacco smoke; **O**ffering help to quit tobacco use; **W**arning about dangers of tobacco; **E**nforcing bans on tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship; and **R**aising tobacco taxes. MPOWER (2008) Bangladesh report describes the policies which include the Act, Rules and national strategies as ‘good’ and identifies some key weaknesses of the policy mainly around the plain packaging, tax increase, public awareness and monitoring.

WHO’s GTE Report (2015) has used the MPOWER framework to analyse the successes and failures of tobacco control policies in its member countries. According to this report, the countries that have shown the most success in controlling tobacco are mostly developed countries such as Australia and Ireland. The few low-income countries like Bhutan and Ghana that are among those that have made considerable success are not much comparable with Bangladesh because of their distinctive demographic and socio-political contexts.

ITCPEP also analyses the impact and progress of the tobacco control policies in Bangladesh on a regular basis. This project published its latest study report in June 2015 and showed that since 2005 Bangladesh has increased taxes on cigarettes and bidis, improved in restricting public smoking, successfully banned the advertisement in mainstream media and amended the Act in a stricter way along with a stricter set of Rules (ITCEP, 2016). However, the report also notes that the production and consumption of tobacco have increased.

The above account of literature highlights four major points. First, not many studies have attempted to understand the implementation of tobacco control measures from a governance perspective in the low-income developing countries like Bangladesh. Second, the literature has identified issues around and in governance and policy implementation namely weak tax structures and administration, failure of the Government bodies to provide alternatives to tobacco to farmers and the monitoring the implementation. Third, the literature does not go deep into explaining why the state has failed to address these issues. Fourth, the studies mainly offer insights from diverse economic perspectives with little analysis of how key stakeholders and their interests affect policy outcome.

This study attempts to delve deeper into some of the political economy issues that help explain the failures in implementation. The following section states and elaborates the key questions of this research.

### 1.3 Research questions

As I discussed in the previous section, the explanations for the increase in tobacco production and consumption in Bangladesh remain inadequate. In order to fill this gap, I started the research with the main question: why did the tobacco control policies in Bangladesh fail to deliver their intended outcomes?

The answers to this question clearly lay in the implementation period and process. Policy implementation not only involves a number of institutions, bodies, agencies and actors in various levels of governance but also affects a number of entities who have stakes in the tobacco sector of Bangladesh. Thus to understand failures of implementation, one has to analyse the interests of the actors that the policies have affected. Besides the monetary profits for the tobacco companies, tobacco also produces economic and political interests and incentives for the stakeholders. Hence, we need to better understand these stakeholders and their interests.

In order to understand these factors and to operationalise this study, I divide my main research question into the following sub-questions:

- a) In what ways do the policies affect the stakeholders and their interests?
- b) How do the institutions and interests shape the implementation process and affect the outcome?

### 1.4 Focus and scope

This study brings governance perspectives to this case of implementation failure, which the existing literature does not address. Due to the limitation of time and words, I have narrowed down the scope of this study in a few ways. Although I noted from the existing literature that there are some global factors and interests that may have affected the implementation, I chose to focus this research on a country-level analysis. Since the answers to the questions of this research lay in the implementation process, I limit the analysis within the implementation time frame since 2003 to till date.

### 1.5 Organisation of this Paper

This paper has four chapters. In the introductory chapter, I start with the background of the problem and present a short account of literature to justify the purpose of this study. Then I introduce the research questions. In the second and third chapter, I discuss my conceptual

framework that I shall use to analyse my findings, and elaborate the methods I used in this research work respectively. Finally, in chapter four, I present my analysis of the findings to explain the puzzle and answer the research questions. In the conclusions, I shall give a short summary of my analyses along with the key arguments of this paper.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

In the previous chapter, I highlighted the background of the problem, the rationale of this study and the questions I seek to answer. From the literature, I recognise that I need a framework that would allow me to look into the politics of implementation of these policies. The sub-questions seek answers through the game of interests among the stakeholders, actors and institutions. Considering these criteria, I prepare a framework (see Figure 1 below) that combines the concepts of the Political Economy Analysis (PEA) and the Policy Implementation Analysis (PIA). I believe analysing the information through this framework shall lead me to explain the puzzles and answer the questions.

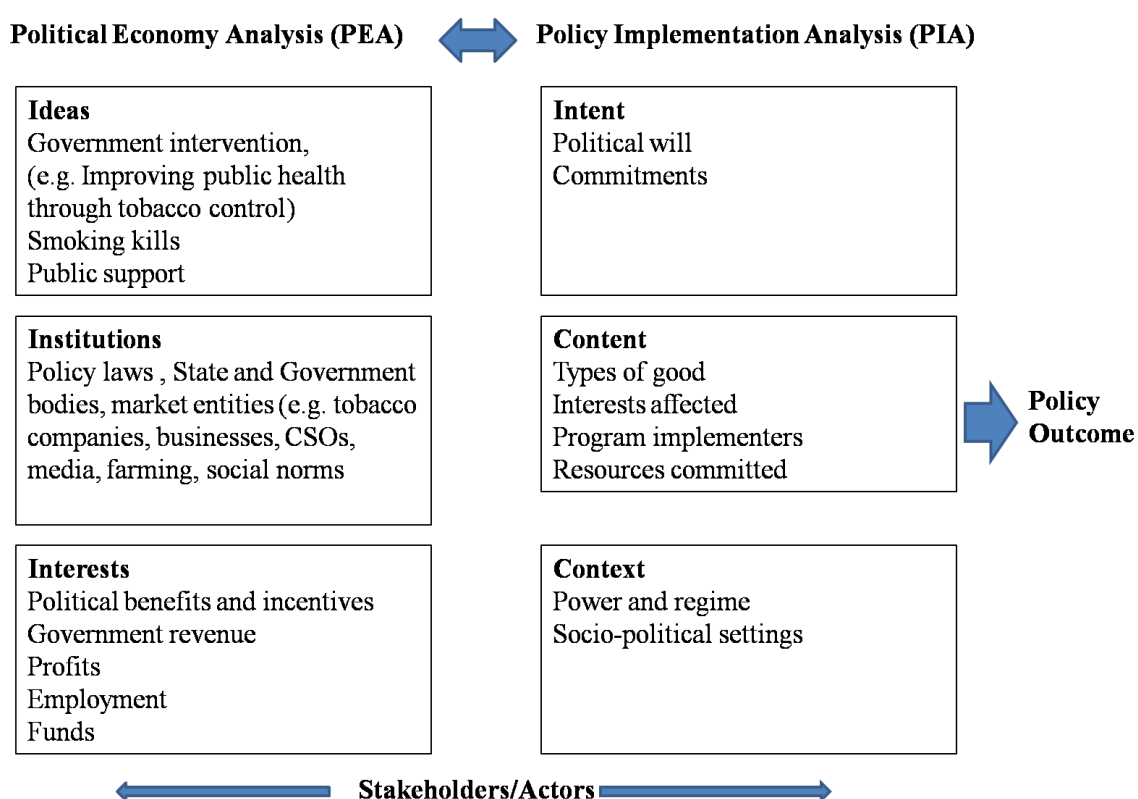


Figure 1: The conceptual framework of this study

The above framework (Figure 1) mainly combines a set of three analytical components of PEA (ideas, institutions and interests) identified by Hall (1997) with a set of three components of PIA (intent, content and context) identified by Grindle (1980). I explain this conceptual framework through the next sections.

## 2.1 The Political Economy Analysis (PEA)

PEA mainly focuses on actors, networks, institutions and their competing interests. Hall (1997) identifies three basic components of a political economy namely ideas, institutions and interests. He argues that analysing these three concepts within an interest-based economy provides an understanding of the politics of it. Pettit and Acosta's (2014) framework explains contemporary PEA through the political dynamics and identifies the significance of two common features of PEA. First, the analysis of institutions is important in understanding how the social and political institutions shape decisions and outcomes, and reproduce asymmetries in order to protect the interests of influential actors. Second, the analysis of individuals crucially includes the best interests of individuals (or a group of like-minded actors) which could be not only material benefits or awards but also common good or behaviour within the setting. The notion of *best interest* may change with context and over time depending on individual's compared gains and benefits.

Hall (1997) notes the significance of ideas to instigate the investigation into an interest-based economy. Ideas not only often turn into institutional measures, but can also create public discourse and agenda. In the process of policymaking and policy actions, these ideas may also affect institutional activity. The interests of the actors (individuals and stakeholders) compete against limited resources, and examining the actor's behaviour and interests lead to the implicit and explicit politics among them. Exploring the game of these interests help to understand who wins and who loses. Analysing the activity and effectiveness of the institutions can lead to exploring the rules of these games. Thus, tracing and analysing the ideas, institutions and interests in a political economy offers explanations and insights to understand the questions regarding the politics in and around.

Tobacco in Bangladesh produces interests and benefits for many actors. Since 2003, the idea of government intervention has generated a set of institutions to control tobacco market as well as new ideas around tobacco. Analysing the ideas, institutions and interests shall help delve into the politics of tobacco control in Bangladesh.

## 2.2 Policy implementation Analysis (PIA)

Policy implementation is a complex process, especially in regards to policies involving goods like tobacco, which involves monetary and political shares, benefits and stakes. Meter and Horn (1975, p. 448) explicitly define policy implementation as “actions by public or private



(individuals or group) directed to the achievements of objectives set forth prior to policy decisions”. Referring to Williams (1971), they also note that an inquiry about implementation seeks to determine whether an organisation (in this case, the Government) can bring together men (individuals and groups) and material (Meter and Horn, 1975 p. 448). They also make a clear distinction between policy impact and policy implementation which takes us to the focus of this dissertation.

Considering the politics of policy implementation in developing countries, Grindle (1980) points out three aspects of a set of policy which are crucial in this study- *intent*, *content* and *context*. Here, *intent* refers to the political will, mainly the will of the political leaders and policy makers; *content* relates to the type of goods and policy as well as the kind of actors involved and interests affected in the decisional units of the policy implementation; and *context* reflects the social and political settings where according to Grindle good intentions are not enough. Grindle (1980) argues that the politics of policy implementation actually begins at the outcome stage when individuals and groups pursue their conflicting interests. I shall analyse the policy implementation processes of this case through these three concepts.

Thus, this study has a two-fold analysis. The analysis of the political economy of tobacco in Bangladesh is followed by the analysis of the implementation of the policies. This combined framework (Figure 1) shall allow me to examine how the ideas, institutions and interests in tobacco control in Bangladesh affect the policy implementation process (*intent*, *content* and *context*) and the outcome of the policy.

### **3. Methodology**

This study is based on data and information collected from primary and secondary sources. I operationalised this research by reviewing the policy documents and existing literature, and collecting and extracting information from primary sources.

#### **3.1 Secondary research**

I started by reviewing the policy papers regarding tobacco control in Bangladesh. These policy papers mainly include the Acts, laws, Rules, Government orders, action plans and FCTC agreement paper. I also reviewed government reports, WHO reports, WB reports, reports of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and so forth. Through this analysis, I initially found out how these policies affect various actors, groups, and organisations, and how they relate to various institutions. Then I tried to find the loopholes in the policies and implementation strategies and to connect to my own experience of working in policy implementation. I could understand the current discussions, discourses, claims and movements around tobacco control. I went through the study and research reports conducted by various academic and research bodies, CSOs and activist groups in order to understand the current narratives regarding tobacco. I engaged with a body of literature not only relating to tobacco control policies in Bangladesh but also about different aspects of local and global tobacco control mechanisms. I came across various perspectives to look into tobacco. These secondary sources helped me find a small part of the explanation, especially regarding my sub-questions, and gave me an idea which questions I should ask my interviewees.

I focused more on the country-level actors, which allowed me to understand more about the national level institutions and political ideas and agenda. I made a list of 10 potential interviewees but I was unable to interview one of them. Considering my research question and the sub-questions, I prepared questions for my interviewees. Then I proceeded to my primary research.

#### **3.2 Primary research**

##### **3.2.1 My own experience**

I am a civil servant, and I have been working for the Government of Bangladesh since 2011. I was involved with the implementation of tobacco control policies in various capacities for more than three years. I received two major pieces of training on tobacco control; one was on

mobile courts (conducted by NTCC) and another was on the management of tobacco control policies (conducted by The Union). In those years, being an executive magistrate, I conducted a number of mobile courts in order to stop smoking in public places, and to take punitive actions against those who breach the law, as well as to take down the advertisements of tobacco products in two districts of Bangladesh. I had also been a member of District Task Force Committee (DTFC) for tobacco control in Sirajganj district. While working in those capacities I had the opportunity to notice some key implicit and explicit political factors that influenced the policy implementation and outcomes. I have experienced how public, private and civil society organisations interact to implement a policy in Bangladesh and how in reality, the institutional mechanisms are often challenged by implicit and explicit politics among the players. My reflections echo when Grindle and Thomas (1989) when they talk about bureaucratic politics, state interests, agenda setting and decision making. I recalled my memories, reflected on my experiences and used those reflections as primary sources in this study.

### 3.2.2 Semi-structured qualitative interviews

I chose to conduct qualitative interviews because I believed that it was the best way to dig into the issues and extract insights in a complicated case like tobacco control. I planned to interview representatives from all key stakeholders. I already knew some of the senior Government officials and members of CSOs who are conscious of these policies and I interviewed them. Through one of the interviewees, I also found a former employee of British American Tobacco (BAT) Company and a tobacco businessperson. I managed to interview a senior journalist and two Members of Parliament (MPs). Thus, the interviews do represent all key stakeholders. Although I sent the questions (Appendix 2: Sample Questionnaire) to the interviewees prior to the sessions, these interviews were semi-structured (Nazneen, 2016; Harrell & Bradley, 2009) and more like conversations.

I took 9 interviews (Appendix 1: list of interviewees) in total. Most of these interviews were on the cell phone, and the rest were through online video calls. I have also received a written statement from a senior Government official. I asked them questions designed to go deep into various aspects of politics regarding tobacco control measures and the policy implementation and allowed them to share about any issues outside those questions. As I have worked in this sector before, I had an idea which sort of questions would generate the discussions of the

issues I was interested in. As almost all of my interviewees asked me not to reveal their names, I use pseudonyms in this paper.

However, there were a few limitations in this method. I interviewed two MPs and due to their shortage of time, I could not have a long discussion with them. Also, I was digging into some issues that are very sensitive and some of my interviewees, despite giving the assurance that their names would not be revealed were not ready to disclose some secrets. I had to pass some questions. As I mentioned, I received a written statement from a top official, as he could not have a video/phone call with me.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, I present the findings and analysis to answer the research questions. After analysing the information obtained from reviewing policy papers, reports, interviews and reflections on my own experiences, I gained insights and explanations to answer my research questions. Through the following sections, I categorically discuss the ideas, institutions and interests in and around tobacco control in Bangladesh, and examine how the politics among the stakeholders has skewed the outcome of the policies.

### 4.1 Key Stakeholders: Who holds the stake? How do they get affected?

Tobacco, as a cash crop has a long history of industrialisation and consumption in Bangladesh. Since the government intervention took place in the market in 2003, several bodies and institutions were set up to implement the policies to control tobacco. Currently, tobacco control involves a number of key stakeholders and it affects almost everyone in the country. After a desk review of the Act, Rules, FCTC documents, policy papers, study and Government orders, I prepared the following table stating the major national level players in the tobacco sector of Bangladesh.

	<b>Stakeholders</b>
<b><i>State</i></b>	Legislative bodies (Lawmakers), NTCC, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Planning Affairs, Ministry of finance, The Ministry of Public Administration, The Ministry of Information, Local Government Bodies, The District Magistracy, The Judiciary, National and local committees, Law enforcing agencies, Public place authorities
<b><i>Market</i></b>	Local small and medium tobacco companies, National and multi-national tobacco companies, Farmers, Businessperson, Consumers, Smokers, Workers and employees of tobacco companies, Business owners/shareholders
<b><i>Society</i></b>	Civil society organizations, NGOs, Media and journalists, Non-smokers and Non-consumers, Common People, Activists, Health professionals, Political leaders, Private authorities (such as privately owned public bus owners)

Table 1: National level stakeholders of tobacco control in Bangladesh

I separated the stakeholders (Table 1) in three broad sectors- state, market and society to provide an explanation how the policies affect these players. However, the interests of these stakeholders often overlap. The state agencies are in charge of leading the policy implementation but the conflicts of interests lay within them. Several studies point out that market entities are more influential and powerful players, while those in the society play mixed roles.

The introduction of tobacco control policies affected a number of state bodies in Bangladesh. Legislative bodies and the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs (MoLPA) are directly involved in making and amending the Act and Rules. The policies gave the Ministry of Finance (MoF) an opportunity to generate more revenue from the sector while the Ministry of Health and Family Planning (MoHFP) has the responsibility to lead the implementation and to make sure that this extra revenue is spent in improving tobacco-related health services. National Tobacco Control Cell (NTCC) along with the national committee for tobacco control is in charge of overseeing the implementation. The Ministry of Information (MoI) is responsible for creating awareness through disseminating relevant messages, especially health warnings; the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) is to provide alternatives to tobacco farming and supports to farmers, and the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) takes care of the workers in the sector. The district magistracy, judiciary and law enforcing agencies collaborate to make public places free of smoking and tobacco promotions.

Several studies (Barkat, 2008, 2013; Peiris, 2013; Hassan *et al.*, 2015) pointed out that the government interventions affected almost all entities in the tobacco market chain, from suppliers to consumers. The intervention comprised of banning and restricting policies of tobacco usage in the country (Mursalin *et al.*, 2013, p. 326). The ban on the promotion and advertisement has put a limit to tobacco businesses and has affected advertising companies and media. The policies aim to reduce the tobacco cultivation which affects the farmers as well as the tobacco companies that buy tobacco leaves from the farmers through contract<sup>6</sup> farming. The obligatory pictorial health warning messages on the packages and the ban on smoking in public places threaten the sale of tobacco products. The attempts to cease the tobacco production and process also threaten the employment of farmers, workers, and tobacco businesses. The policies impose a tax on tobacco sale and raise the price each year which affects the tobacco users, tobacco company owners, businesses and the shareholders.

Non-users including adults and children are, however, positively affected, as the ban on the smoking in public places protectss them from second-hand smoking. CSOs, NGOs, activists and local political leaders also get the opportunity to participate in the implementation of the policies.

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<sup>6</sup> Contract Farming is a form credit agreement between the tobacco companies and farmers. The tobacco companies offer advance credits to the farmers for cultivating tobacco. After harvest, the farmers have to sell the tobacco leaves at a price agreed during the credit agreement. For details please see Barkat (2008).

#### 4.2 Ideas: Tobacco control, smoking and public support

In a political economy, as Hall (1997) and Hay (2004) argue, ideas play a major role in setting a political agenda. Although a few organisations had been advocating for anti-smoking laws in Bangladesh, the government intervention was a foreign idea imported into the country in the early 2000s. As Sujon Mahmud, one of my interviewees who has been an activist for creating a tobacco-free world for more than 15 years, believes that the idea of tobacco control came neither from the society nor from the state. There were basically two arguments, he added; one was from the economists (mainly led by the World Bank) who argued that along with tax and foreign exchange, tobacco also generates negative externalities including damaging our health and environment; another was from the few CSOs and NGOs (funded and influenced by foreign organisations such as WHO) who campaigned for anti-smoking regulations to improve public health. The idea of tobacco control has neither been a politically supported one nor become a popular public agenda.

Tobacco control fails to be a sustained public agenda. Generally, it is the mass media that not only sets the agenda but also facilitates the public discussions around it. However, there is little and inconsistent media coverage on tobacco-related issues. Interviewee Shirin Bokul, a senior journalist, says, ‘we only see news and discussions every year in the financial budget period because tobacco tax is a big issue. But the media, whether it is private or state-owned, does not seem much interested in tobacco.’ Although “smoking is bad”, “Smoking kills” and “Smoking causes cancer” are acknowledged by everyone, the fact that smoking does not kill people immediately makes it perceived as less severe by the public, especially in comparison to other disasters that cause instantaneous deaths such as road accidents and cyclones.

Interviewee Sujon Mahmud points out that by “tobacco” most people still mean smoking only. Although the tobacco control policies in Bangladesh formally originated from the FCTC, the policies were transferred from high income developed countries where people hardly use non-smoking products. Hence, the majority of the tobacco control measures deal with the smoking products. The policies hardly address non-smoking products of tobacco.

Tobacco control in Bangladesh remains an important idea that deals predominantly with smoking only. The agenda fails to gather mass support.

### 4.3 Institutions: Activity and effectiveness

The institutions related to tobacco in Bangladesh can also mainly be separated into three broad categories: state, market and society. Most of the state institutions (e.g. written laws and regulations, state and government bodies and the committees) are not active enough to be effective in this case. Interviewee Meher Akhter, who has been working in NTCC for three years, states that NTCC is underfunded despite being the agency in charge to implement the tobacco control policies. She adds, NTCC mainly imparts training to government officials and holds seminars to create awareness among civil society members. She also confirmed that the meetings of the national committee are held irregularly. If I reflect on my own experience of being a member of district committee for tobacco control, I did not see any meeting being held at my workplace. Barkat (2008) also spotted the inactivity of state institutions by pointing out that Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) failed to provide the farmers with alternatives to tobacco farming. Among the government bodies, the MoF is fairly active in raising and collecting taxes from the tobacco companies, businesses and consumers. The district administration and district magistracy are active as they can earn revenue through conducting mobile courts and collecting fines from the individuals who smokes in public places and the companies that breach the law.

Despite state interventions, the market institutions are operating effectively. As the demand for tobacco leafs and products is increasing, tobacco companies continue contract farming with tobacco farmers in order to increase cultivation and production. This explains the failure of DAE in providing farmers with an alternative to tobacco farming. For instance, Chandan Barua, a former employee of BAT, shares how he and his team used to promote tobacco products through alternative ways including product promotion<sup>7</sup> and placement in films and open air concerts. Several reports confirm his claim that tobacco companies, especially the local ones with the assistance from local political leaders, offer interest-free credits for contract farming (Barkat, 2008; Gomez, 2014; Progga, 2015). Studies also show that despite the annual price rise caused by tax rise, the consumption of tobacco did not decrease because it does not much effectively increase real price<sup>8</sup> (Barkat, 2013). Nargis *et al.* (2016) also show that despite the increase in price, the smoking products in Bangladesh are still very

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<sup>7</sup> Buyers often get lottery coupon upon the purchase of a certain number of packs of products. Tobacco Industries Watch (TIW) collects news reports regarding these alternative promotions. These reports can be accessed at <http://www.tobaccoindustrywatchbd.org/article>

<sup>8</sup> Barkat (2013) studied the effects of tax and price rise on the smoking commodities and found that the increase of price, considering the annual inflation and increase of average per capita income, is very negligible. That is why; the price rise hardly affects the sale of smoking products.



much affordable. The impact of the ban on advertisement has also limited effect on market institutions. Tobacco companies continue to make profits by increasing the price of tobacco products and pay the increased tax. Consumers still have diversely priced products in various forms to purchase- cheap, medium and costly (DT, June 23, 2015). Thus, the state interventions are not causing many struggles to the market institutions.

The CSOs and NGOs continue to advocate for tobacco control in Bangladesh with little tangible outcomes. They also continue to be part of the Government-led tobacco control bodies and committees but have failed to put much pressure on the state and market institutions. Interviewee Mahbubul Karim (MP) thinks that the activities of NGOs and CSOs are contradictory, as, on one hand, they call for tax rise, but on the other hand, they also demand to limit the businesses of tobacco companies. The CSOs and NGOs do not seem to have the power neither to challenge the inactivity of state institutions nor to break the market status quo. Interviewee Hasan Sarker, a government employee at a District Administration, thinks that the policies have affected the social norms of public smoking in a contradictory manner because public smoking is banned, but at the same time, there are designated places to smoke in public places.

Hence, the economy of tobacco is quite vibrant. Most of the state institutions are neither active nor effective. The Government is only active in taxing the products, which has also proved not very effective to control the market. Market institutions especially the businesses around tobacco are very active and working well to continue making a profit. The activity of civil society institutions is not powerful enough to create any tangible impact.

#### **4.4 Interests: who wins, who loses?**

According to political economy analysis, as Hall (1997) and Pettit and Acosta (2014, p. 14) notes, understanding the winning losing game is always a key to go deep into an interest-based economy which most of the earlier studies did not focus on. International organizations mainly the World Bank, WHO and The Union funded the studies on tobacco control. These studies, without exploring the rule of the game, implicitly identified the tobacco companies as winners. I found that the Government is also a clear winner in this case as it earns a lot of revenue through taxing tobacco. In contrast to that, Abdus Samad, a senior Government official revealed that the Government hardly increases the budget to create health services to cure tobacco-related illness meaning that the revenue gets spent as per the Government's interests and choice. Businessperson Abdul Karim claims that the consumers and users do not

need to increase their financial budget for tobacco as they still have options to go for cheap products. These cheap products are more harmful to health. Hence, they lose the quality of their health anyway. CSOs and NGOs get funds to continue their campaigns and lobby for more legislative and policy actions against tobacco (Hasib, 2015). Non-users of tobacco suffer badly as they get exposed to second-hand smoking as a lot of people smoke open places. Ullah *et al.*, (2013) and several interviewees inform that the Government failed to make the public places smoke-free. It badly affects the public health and environment. Farmers continue to grow tobacco as a cash crop. They often get a tobacco-related illness. Tobacco farming causes environmental damages. Interviewee Shirin Bokul identifies that media do not see tobacco as a big issue; interviewee Chandan Barua says that the tobacco companies offer monetary and non-monetary incentives (e.g. gifts, sponsored travels etc.) to keep the journalists away from reporting about tobacco.

Investigating the interests explored more politics in this case. This politics among the stakeholders has two faces: the conflict of interests and the coalition of interests. First, Interests of different ministries and individuals conflict and confront each other. The MoF wants to generate more revenue through the production of tobacco; the MoHFPA treats this production as a threat to public health, while the MoLE wants to conserve the employment of people in this sector. As Sujon Mahmud says, ‘A minister when he was in charge of MoFPA tried hard to implement these policies, and later when he became the Finance Minister, he became totally indifferent to the same issues.’ These conflicts of interests depict that the Government efforts to control tobacco are neither clear nor harmonious. The conflict of interests is also present among the tobacco companies. In Bangladesh, in terms of the production, the leading national tobacco companies are BAT, The Dhaka Tobacco Ltd and Akij Group, while many small tobacco companies operate at a local level. Interviewee Chandan Barua gives a crucial insight into the competition in the market among the companies and their shareholders. He says the national companies find it difficult to get into village level tobacco markets because these small companies are mostly owned by the local political leaders.

Second, state interests often merge with business interests. Some of the members of the governing bodies of two largest tobacco companies, BAT and the Dhaka Tobacco Ltd. are political leaders and top Government officials. For instance, the governing body of BAT contains four representing members from the Government. These four persons are

Secretaries<sup>9</sup> of different ministries. As one senior Government official explains that the idea behind holding these positions is not only to create bridges between the Government and big private sector but also to help the companies operate within the guidelines set by the policies. On the contrary, Sujon Mahmud claims that the companies earlier used their political influence and unethical means to help these four persons to become the Secretaries in the key ministries. When they became Secretaries as well as the members of the governing body, the companies push their interest through these Government officials. Earlier this year an online newspaper reported that the secretary of the MoHFPA opposed the idea of putting the pictorial health warnings on the tobacco packs (Bdnews24, June 15, 2016). This clearly supports Sujon Mahmud's claim and shows how various interests come together and make coalition in this case.

The silence of the political leaders in tobacco issues proves that they may have to lose something if they speak up. A few of my interviewees mention that some political leaders, including MPs are the owners and shareholders of tobacco companies. This generates conflicts as well as a coalition of interests and affects the implementation which I shall discuss in the next section.

#### **4.5 Politics of policy implementation: Intent, Content and Context**

The analysis of the ideas, institutions and interests in the previous sections discovers that despite a set of good and well-intended policies in place, games did not much change for the key stakeholders especially for tobacco companies and farmers. Key state institutions are inactive and not effective. This takes to us to the fact that the problems and the politics lay in the implementation phase. In this section, I am going to analyse how these ideas, institutions and interests around tobacco affected the implementation process and policy outcome.

##### **4.5.1 Intent: Lack of will and commitment**

Grindle (1980) argues that the political intent is the key to implementing a policy in a low-income developing country. The evidences suggest that the political intent and commitment are lacking in this case. Nasiruddin Ahmed, former Chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR) in Bangladesh in one of his public lectures in 2011 revealed that just before the yearly budget parliamentary session, 120 MPs wrote Demi-official (DO) letters addressing the

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<sup>9</sup> Secretary is the most senior position in a ministry for a non-elected bureaucrat in Bangladesh. S/he is the Chief Executive of the ministry and work under the political leadership of a minister. To know more please visit [http://www.batbangladesh.com/group/sites/BAT\\_9T5FQ2.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DOA53LZ4](http://www.batbangladesh.com/group/sites/BAT_9T5FQ2.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DOA53LZ4)

Finance Minister asking not to raise taxes on tobacco products (Ahmed, 2012). As MP Meherun Islam says, ‘I believe we should control tobacco, but at the same time, we also need to understand that many of our people are working in these companies.’ In regard to this, Chandan Barua said that each year the tobacco companies spend a lot of money to purchase valuable gifts for the MPs for getting these DO letters written and sent to the finance minister and some top level bureaucrats. Sujon Mahmud claims that the number of these DO letters has increased in last few years. These lawmakers (MPs) approved the amendments to the tobacco control Act in 2013 which made the law more strict for tobacco companies (Peiris, 2013). This means that the policy makers despite making tough tobacco control laws, do not actually hold the intent to implement. Several interviewees claim that the political leaders sometimes use competing problems like natural disasters to distract the attention of the people and sometimes use potential unemployment problem as a shield.

Both Meher Akhter and Sujon Mahmud confirm that the Government is not interested in assessing the policy implementation progress. NTCC only compiles the reports of the number of mobile courts conducted in the country and the amount of money they generated. The monitoring national committee do not hold meetings regularly. Many ministers and policy makers still smoke in official and unofficial public gatherings (DT, January 28, 2014). In 2014, media caught the former social welfare minister smoking while attending as the chief guest of a state function. The political leaders, as many of the interviews mention, still use smoking and chewing tobacco products in political campaigns and elections.

Based on the evidence, I can make three points here. First, as tobacco control is an imported idea and it failed to achieve much public support, the elected political leaders do not see any political incentives in implementing the policies. The failure of implementation creates some activities in CSOs but these irregular activities hardly affect the Government. Second, many of the policymakers and political leaders have monetary interests in tobacco businesses. The intent of these policymakers is dominant as Sujon Mahmud mentions that the few MPs who talk in favour of tobacco control fail to get support neither from their colleagues nor from the public. Third, the lack of intent and commitment has affected implementation agencies all over the country and created a discourse among these agencies that these policies are not meant to be implemented. Thus, the policies remain contained in paper and in some ceremonial activities including the celebration of World No Tobacco Day<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> WHO celebrates World No Tobacco Day on 31<sup>st</sup> May every year among the countries that signed FCTC.

#### 4.5.2 **Content: Issues in implementation**

The game of interests and institutions that I discussed earlier has affected the field level implementing agencies. The absence of political leadership and lack of commitment towards tobacco control have turned into politics and failure in implementation. The policies fail to bring men and groups together towards the directed goals and objectives that Meter and Horn (1975) argue to be crucial in making an implementation success.

As interviewee Hasan Sarkar, who is currently a member of district committee for tobacco control confirms that he does not see much of the activities of this committee. Every month the chair of the committee receives a letter of instruction from NTCC asking for the reports of mobile courts and fines. The implementation of the policies majorly depends on these field level committees as they have been assigned three major tasks- (i) to coordinate all government agencies to focus on their respective tasks to control tobacco, (ii) to discourage local farmers to cultivate tobacco and prepare regular assessment report and (iii) to conduct punitive actions against those who breach the law.

The task force committees are deactivated due to four major reasons. First, a lot of members of these committee who are either bureaucrats or civil society members are smokers and tobacco users and do not have the moral strength to fight against tobacco. I have witnessed that in many state and government functions, tobacco (with betel nuts) is officially offered to the guests. Second, the national committee that is supposed to direct the local committees, as I mentioned earlier, are also not very active. The top level bureaucrats who work at the office of the Prime Minister and the President, as Sujon Mahmud and one senior Government official claim, receives cigarette cartoons as gifts every month from tobacco companies. Third, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) heads the committee for tobacco control at the district level. As a designated member-secretary of the committee, the District Civil Surgeon (DCS) is supposed to call the meetings. Hasan Sarker reveals that DCS does not want to call a meeting under the supervision of same ranked district officer, DC. Fourth, as Hasan Sarkar adds, the District Development Committee (DDC), which is a core committee for implementing development plans and projects thinks that the law enforcing agencies should focus on drugs like Heroine and Fencidyl, not on tobacco. Because most of the members of DDC think that if they keep young people away from smoking, they may go for other more harmful and fatal drug addictions.

Grindle (1980) argue that the success or failure of policy implementation in achieving the targeted outcome also depends on the kind of actors and stakeholders it involves. As I discussed above and showed in Table 1, the tobacco control policies involve various kinds of actors and affect everyone in the country. The game of interests among these stakeholders is very complicated. Interviewee Hasan Sarker shares a story. He conducted a mobile court and punished a local tobacco company with a fine of 1500 US dollars approximately for breaching the law. The review authority of the court, District Magistrate (DM) immediately received phone calls from the local Member of Parliament (MP) as well as from a national television (TV) actor both asking for reducing the amount of fine. The crucial point in this story is that MP represents the Legislative, DM represents the Executive, Sarker represents a part of Judiciary and the TV actor represents the Society, and the tobacco company represents the market. This tells us that how complicated it can be. It is easy to exert a policy decision but when all interests converge together and against, it seems hard for some to continue a fight.

Due to the issues in implementation, the interests of the stakeholders prevail, and the implementation suffer. The policies do not deliver their intended outcome.

#### 4.5.3 Context: Socio-political settings

Grindle (1980, p 14) states, ‘good intentions may count for little if those responsible for various policies or programs are unable to control their pursuits’. In this case, although the policies have good intentions, but the individuals and actors who are responsible for implementing, as I explained earlier, are pursuing their interests and competing for access to resources and benefits. If I reflect on my own experiences, I can recall memories of observing some implicit politics which none of my interviewees talks about. While working as a member of the implementation team, I observed an implicit agreement between the local political leaders who have shares in tobacco businesses and those who are responsible for implementing the policies. The agreement was to not taking too many actions against local tobacco companies and businesses.

Another key factor that Grindle (1980) mentions, is the type of regime. The current Government in Bangladesh came to power in 2014 through a controversial election in which the main opposition party did not participate, and out of 300 MPs, more than half (154) were elected unchallenged, without any contest (Ahmed, 2014). The Government took charge with a long term plan ‘Vision 2020’ which is a political commitment to take the country into the

club of middle-income states by extensive economic developments. MP Mahbubul Karim admits that the Government now focuses more on increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through maximising the employment and production. This shows that the current regime continuously seeks economic development and has achieved tangible growth to showcase before people. In this setting, this regime is not likely to force many struggle on the tobacco companies. As I discussed early, the interests of the policymakers favour the tobacco businesses.

The actors from the society including the CSOs and NGOs are active but do not have the power to fight against the coalition of political interests and commitments. Tobacco companies continue to generate profits and therefore have the power to spend money to influence the implementation processes. Hasan Sarkar says that many people in Bangladesh believe that smoking helps them to relieve stress. People in the villages traditionally consume tobacco in different forms like *zarda*<sup>11</sup>, *gul*, *sadapata*, and do not see it as a bad thing, he adds. Due to these social and cultural factors, non-smoking tobacco remains unaddressed.

Thus, the socio-political settings have affected the implementation and skewed the outcome.

#### **4.6 Supplementary findings and scope of further research**

In the previous sections, I have presented my key findings and analyses to explain the puzzle why despite having the policies in place, Bangladesh was not able to control tobacco. Through this study, I also found some additional findings that do not fit the scope and framework of this research. I can mention a few of them here so that further studies can attempt to focus on these issues.

First, I found some individuals who have multiple identities in the society, and they use different institutional identity to pursue their interests from tobacco control measures. Second, the culture of tobacco consumption in Bangladesh is embedded in the society. The policies hardly address this tobacco culture. Finally, the Government, as well as a few NGOs claims that tobacco control measures as a success in Bangladesh. I found that although the policies have created an impact and been effective to implement the ban on advertisements and promotion through mainstream media, this is a failure case. Further analysis can be brought to this point through other perspectives.

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<sup>11</sup> *Zarda, gul, sadapata* are chewing tobacco products.

## 5. Conclusions

In this dissertation, I focused on the politics of the country-level stakeholders and their interests in tobacco control measures in Bangladesh since 2003. Through the analyses, I explained why tobacco control policies in Bangladesh failed to achieve their intended outcomes.

Firstly, I analysed the ideas around tobacco control and found that the idea of Government intervention in the tobacco market was imported to Bangladesh through WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2003. The idea failed to generate much public support, and could not become a sustained political agenda as most people perceive tobacco as smoking only, and smoking is perceived to be less life-threatening and more useful to relieve stress. The Government does not find any political incentives in implementing the policies. The implementation lacked the political will and commitment and failed to deliver.

Secondly, the institutions that were created through the interventions since 2003 have mostly been inactive. State institutions failed to affect market institutions. Due to the failure of Government bodies and mechanisms, farmers continue to increase tobacco farming. The annual tax rise failed to create an impact on the consumption. Tobacco business continues to make profits. The Government failed to take control over the market.

Thirdly, the politics of tobacco control lay in the game of interests as well as in the implementation mechanisms. The major winners of the game of interests are the Government and the tobacco companies as both of these players continue to make monetary and political benefits. The interests of the policymakers, top bureaucrats and tobacco business owners also merge to create benefits for these winning players. The smokers and tobacco users lose the quality of their health, and non-users continue to get exposed to second-hand smoking. Those who are powerful in the system continue to generate and share benefits.

Fourthly, the implementation of the policies suffers from complicated politics of all types of interest-driven actors. Implicit agreements between the political institutions and the state bodies including the core responsible committees make the whole implementation process paralysed. The political leaders and the bureaucrats use competing priorities like natural disasters to distract the attention of the people. They also use the problem of potential unemployment as their shields in tobacco control case.



Finally, the socio-political context hinders the implementation process. The donor-funded NGOs continue to campaign for tougher policies. Although the CSOs are parts of the implementation committees, they do not seem powerful enough to affect the political commitment. Although being aware of the harmful effects of tobacco consumption, people do not seem much concerned. Tobacco also serves the current Government's interest of increasing growth through maximising production and employment. The Government sees tobacco as more of a source of revenue than a problem of public health.

In a word, the struggle for resources and benefits among the stakeholders in tobacco control in Bangladesh has failed the policies to achieve their intended outcomes. If this implementation failure continues, creating a tobacco-free Bangladesh by 2040 will remain a mere dream.

The findings of this study and the arguments I made in this paper are crucial in three major points. First, they bring new and varied governance perspective to understand the issues around tobacco control in Bangladesh. Second, they provide insights of the games of interests which help to understand an interest-based economy like tobacco. Third, they have implications for studying the case of policy success and failure in the low and middle-income developing countries like Bangladesh.

**Appendix 1: List of Interviewees (Pseudonyms)**

1. Abdus Samad, Secretary, Ministry of Information, Government of Bangladesh
2. Sujon Mahmud, Work for Better Bangladesh, (NGO) and Tobacco Expert
3. Chandan Barua, Former employee of British American Tobacco Ltd.
4. Meherun Islam, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh
5. Hasan Sarker, Assistant Commissioner, District Administration, Khulna
6. Shirin Bokul, Journalist, Prothom Alo, Bangladesh
7. Abdul Karim, Businessperson, Medium Enterprise, Sirajganj, Bangladesh
8. Mahbubul Karim, Member of Parliament
9. Meher Akhter, Employee, National Tobacco Control Cell.

## Appendix 2: Sample Questionnaire

Questionnaire for MA Dissertation: Tobacco Control Politics in Bangladesh

Date: June 13, 2016

Category: District Committee for Tobacco Control (Local Political Representative)

Name: Abdul Karim (Pseudonym)

Sex: Male

Age: 43

Address: Sirajganj, Bangladesh

Political Positions: Vice President, District Awami League, Bangladesh

### Questions

1. How many years have you been involved with politics?
2. Have you ever participated in any election? How many? Are they local, regional or national?
3. How often do you participate in election and political campaigns?
4. Are you a smoker?
5. Have you heard about the tobacco control? (If yes) Can you tell us more about it?
6. Do you go to any meeting regarding tobacco at any Government office? (If yes) How often? Why? Where?
7. What roles do you play in the district to control tobacco? How do you do that?
8. Why do you think the Government (or you as a member of District Committee) have failed to control tobacco?
9. Do you think that tobacco is an addiction? If yes, why do we not call it a drug?
10. We see many of the political leaders are against tobacco-control; especially they do not want the Government to raise a tax on tobacco. What is your say on that?
11. We also see a lot of political campaigns, especially the elections use bidis and cigarettes for the voters. What do you think about it?
12. Have you ever met a tobacco farmer? What do you think about them?
13. What do you think about this tobacco control? What roles political leaders play here?
14. Do you have any ideas regarding tobacco control policy of the Government?
15. What are the main reasons, in your opinion, the Government is not being able to control tobacco in Bangladesh?

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