

Assessment of Compliance with Tobacco Packaging and Labeling Policies across 14 Low- and Middle-income Countries

Background

Article 11 of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) requires that parties implement effective tobacco packaging and labeling measures to increase public awareness of the negative health impacts of tobacco products.

Objective

The Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS) was developed to document the variety of tobacco packs available in 14 low- and middle-income countries and monitor whether required health warnings are being implemented as intended.

Methods

- Tobacco packs systematically purchased in 14 countries in 2013, including China, India and Viet Nam
- Three cities in India and Viet Nam and five cities in China, of the top ten most populated cities in each country, selected based on cultural, geographic and linguistic diversity
- In each city, tobacco packs purchased from up to 12 vendors selected from low, middle and high socioeconomic neighborhoods
- Cigarette packs displaying health warning labels (HWL) in rotation at the time of purchase coded for key HWL requirements by two independent coders; discrepancies were resolved

Conclusions

- Compliance with key HWL requirements was high for packs from Viet Nam and China; less than half of the packs from India were compliant with key HWL requirements
- In most instances of non-compliance, warnings were found to be smaller than specified by country requirements
- Continual surveillance of tobacco packaging can inform advocacy efforts to strengthen implementation of packaging and labeling laws
- Since data collection, Viet Nam and India have passed new laws, requiring pictorial health warnings in Viet Nam and increasing the size of India's pictorial warnings to 85%
- Wave II of data collection will allow for comparison with baseline data

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Viet Nam

- 146 unique packs were collected in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang
- 83 packs displayed the Viet Nam HWL in use at the time of purchase
- 76% of packs displaying a Viet Nam HWL in use at the time of purchase met all four key HWL requirements of the Viet Nam law
- Requirements in place at the time of purchase fulfilled the minimum specifications in FCTC Article 11 in regards to HWL location, size and color; Viet Nam HWLs now include pictures

Compliance with Key Health Warning Label Requirements

Requirement	Number of compliant packs (Total packs=83)	% Compliant
Warning Location <i>Must be positioned on the front and back of the pack</i>	83	100%
Warning Size <i>Must cover 30% of both the front and back of the pack</i>	63	76%
Warning Label Elements <i>Text must be black and background must be white</i>	83	100%
Warning Text Size <i>Text must be at least 2mm tall</i>	83	100%
Total packs compliant with all four key requirements	63	76%



India

- 130 unique packs were collected in Mumbai, New Delhi and Chennai
- 75 packs displayed an India HWL in use at the time of purchase
- 47% of packs displaying an India HWL in use at the time of purchase met all four key HWL requirements of the India law
- Requirements in place at the time of purchase aligned with FCTC Article 11 recommendations that warnings include pictures; India HWLs will soon cover 85% of both principle display areas

Compliance with Key Health Warning Label Requirements

Requirement	Number of compliant packs (Total packs=75)	% Compliant
Warning Location <i>Must be positioned on the front of the pack</i>	75	100%
Warning Size <i>Must cover 40% of the front of the pack</i>	60	80%
Warning Label Elements <i>"Warning" in red and "Smoking Kills" in white on a black background, picture depicting the ill effects of tobacco above the text</i>	75	100%
Warning Text Size <i>The warning must maintain a 0.75 to 1 ratio of its vertical to horizontal length</i>	39	52%
Total packs compliant with all four key requirements	35	47%



China

- 458 unique packs were collected in Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Kunming and Chengdu
- 357 packs displayed a China HWL in use at the time of purchase
- 96% of packs displaying a China HWL in use at the time of purchase met all four key China HWL requirements
- Requirements in place at the time of purchase fulfilled the minimum specifications in FCTC Article 11 in regards to HWL location and size; however, requirements do not align with recommendations that HWLs include pictures or that warnings use specified colors that enhance visibility and legibility

Compliance with Key Health Warning Label Requirements

Requirement	Number of compliant packs (Total packs=357)	% Compliant
Warning Location <i>Must be positioned on the front and back of the pack</i>	357	100%
Warning Size <i>Must cover 30% of both the front and back of the pack</i>	343	96%
Warning Label Elements <i>The color of the health warning text must contrast with the background color of the HWL</i>	357	100%
Warning Text Size <i>Text must be at least 4mm tall</i>	356	99.7%
Total packs compliant with all four key requirements	343	96%



Other Findings



This pack displays the name "Agrex Saigon" in the background of the white portion of the packaging. The name is carried through the health warning label, reducing the clarity of the warning.



Across the packs, there was variation in the color of the picture depicting the ill effects of tobacco.



China regulations permit the background color of the warning to be the same as the existing color or pattern of the packaging.



China regulations require that the health warning text and background sufficiently contrast but do not specify which colors should be used.