Warning Labels and Plain Packaging in the Tobacco Context
Why packaging and labelling?

– Packs are ‘mini-billboards’
– Cheapest form of advertising for the industry
– A pack-a-day smoker looks at a pack 7300 times a year (20 cigarettes x 365 days)
Misleading packaging and labelling

– Parties must ensure that packaging and labelling do not promote a tobacco product by any means that are

• false, misleading, or

• likely to create an erroneous impression about its characteristics, health effects, hazards, and emissions,

• including any term, descriptor, trademark, figurative or any other sign that directly or indirectly creates the false impression that a particular tobacco product is less harmful, e.g. ‘low tar,’ ‘light,’ ‘ultra-light’ or ‘mild’
Health Warnings

– Tobacco consumers look at the pack whenever they take out a cigarette or product

– Warnings use this behaviour for health education instead of marketing

– Cost of implementation borne by industry

Image: Mauritius, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, WHO FCTC Health Warnings Database
Health Warnings

– Large, clear, visible and legible

Images: Canadian Cancer Society
Health Warnings

- Pictures

  - More effective than text-only warnings
  - More noticeable
  - Emotional impact
  - More easily understood
  - Effective in low literacy populations

Image: WHO Health Warnings database
Health Warnings

– In all principal languages of the country
– Address a range of issues, e.g. messages tailored to gender, age, or particular groups
– Clear, concise and culturally appropriate
– Address gender-specific risks

Images: Canadian Cancer Society
Health Warnings

– Size
  • Should be 50+%, but no less than 30% of the principal display areas
  • Larger is better – effectiveness increases with size

– Placement and location
  • All principal display areas
  • At the top

Image: Canadian Cancer Society
Health Warnings

– Rotation – change warnings from time to time

Images: WHO Health Warnings Database / Ministry of Public Health, Uruguay
Plain or Standardized Packaging

– WHO FCTC Article 11 Guidelines defines plain packaging as:

“measures to restrict or prohibit the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style”
Plain or Standardized Packaging

– WHO FCTC Article 13 Guidelines describe plain packaging as:

• “black and white or two contrasting colours, as prescribed by national authorities;

• nothing other than a brand name, a product name and/or manufacturer’s name, contact details and the quantity of product in the packaging, without any logos or other features apart from health warnings, tax stamps and other government-mandated information or markings;

• prescribed font style and size; and

• standardized shape, size and materials.

• There should be no advertising or promotion inside or attached to the package or on individual cigarettes or other tobacco products.”
Why Implement Plain or Standardized Packaging?

- **Rationale**
  - Increasing the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings
  - Addressing misleading packaging and labelling
  - Eliminating tobacco packaging as a form of advertising and promotion
  - Reducing the attractiveness of tobacco products

- In order to contribute to the broader goal of protecting health by reducing demand for tobacco products
Why Implement Plain or Standardized Packaging?

- Recommended under the FCTC guidelines
- One of the WHO ‘best buys’ for NCDs
- Australia was the first country to adopt plain packaging
- 22 countries and counting have now adopted plain packaging

Image: Plain Packaging Tobacco Products: Evidence, Design and Implementation (WHO, 2016)
Resources on Tobacco Plain Packaging

Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240051607
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