

A OVERVIEW OF ANTI-TOBACCO CAMPAIGNS WORLDWIDE

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Abstract:

Governments around the world are promoting community participation in their tobacco cessation programmes which aim to reduce tobacco usage through steps such as:

- Ban on advertisements
- Warnings on tobacco products
- Anti-tobacco campaigns
- Posters

India has started pictorial warnings on all tobacco products since 31st May '09, World NoTobacco Day. Warnings on such packaging using pictures increase public awareness of the serious health risks of tobacco use much more effectively, convincing users to quit.

Various countries have been cracking down on tobacco companies and have been passing increasingly strict legislation on what they can do, both by way of product formulation and by way of advertising.

This article highlights governments' strategy in various countries towards reducing/eliminating tobacco usage, which aims to see improved health of the masses. It presents a worldwide review of warnings that appear on tobacco packaging and advertisements.

The year 2009 was declared by World Health Organization (WHO) as the year of "Tobacco Health Warnings". WHO called on policy-makers to enact measures to ensure appropriate tobacco health warnings on all packs of tobacco products in accordance with related provisions of the Framework Convention and to implement the guidelines adopted by the Conference of Parties (CoP)¹. Various countries have placed severe strictures on tobacco companies through increasingly strict legislations controlling product formulation and advertising. This article gives an overview of anti-tobacco campaigns worldwide. In India, the then Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss, had been the leading light in this country's anti-tobacco campaigns, first enacting a law in October 2008 banning smoking in public places². Pictorial warnings were introduced on all packaging containing tobacco products with effect from World No Tobacco Day, 31st May 2009. These, by law should consist of two rotating textual and pictorial health warnings on 40% of the surface area of smoking tobacco product packages and one textual and pictorial health warning for smokeless tobacco product packages. (Fig:1)



Fig.: 1

Similarly, in Australia, the law says that 30% of the front and 90% of the back of cigarette pack must be occupied by such warnings. (Fig:2)



Fig. : 2

Some countries such as the United States of America pay emphasis on written warnings (Fig:3)³ whereas others such as Thailand use pictorial warnings (Fig:4)⁴.



Fig.: 3

Fig. : 4

An important role in educating the public against the harmful effects of tobacco and its products has also been played in India as well as across the world, by anti-tobacco activists. These activists come from various walks of life like school students (Fig:5)⁵ and societies like “ROKO CANCER”, which is India's first mobile cancer detection unit primarily concerned with breast and oral cancer. (Fig:6)⁶.



Fig.: 5

Fig.: 6

We have come across in our search, a large number of anti-tobacco messages from around the world. The following are just a few of those messages. (Fig: 7,8,9,10)



Fig.: 7

Fig.: 8



Fig.: 9

Fig.: 10

Following the stand taken by the governments from across the globe, the Indian government has also imposed stricter laws regarding tobacco products, their advertising and usage in public places. But the tobacco industry continuously undermines these initiatives by using attractive and alluring advertisements to entice the younger and more susceptible population. However, in the absence of enforcement, the ban on smoking in public places in India has lost its effectiveness. Though tax inspectors, station masters, gazetted officers, postmasters, public and private office heads, librarians and airport officers, and even restaurant managers, are authorized to slap a Rs.200 fine, this cannot be collected without handing the offenders a “challan”. But those authorized to collect the fine do not have “challans” or receipts to issue,

and cannot therefore legally collect a fine.¹¹

The final word in the whole picture is that of the addict, who will not leave his addiction, in spite of laws, rules or on account of scary photographs or words, unless he or she is self-motivated to do so.

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