

A GACD Implementation Science e-Hub Case Study

Knowledge synthesis on plain packaging to assess existing evidence to promote the selection of evidence-based policies and interventions for implementation in India

This case study was developed based on the work of

A comprehensive knowledge synthesis report on the possibility of plain packaging in India

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Case study summary

This case study outlines the process of synthesising knowledge on tobacco plain packaging policies for implementation in India, emphasising the importance of [local context](#) in adopting evidence-based policies and interventions.

Identification and characterisation of implementation issues

With India being the world's second-largest consumer of tobacco, the high prevalence of tobacco use presents significant challenges. The 2003 COTPA act made some inroads but was not sufficiently impactful, leading to considerations of plain packaging as a more effective intervention.

Selection, adaptation, and application of implementation strategies

The proposed plain packaging policy, removing all branding from tobacco products, is based on significant evidence, especially from Australia. However, adapting this to India's context, including its diverse tobacco products, necessitates localised evidence and strategies.

Development and delivery of the stakeholder engagement strategy

An Indo-Australian taskforce, supported by a grant, undertook a comprehensive knowledge synthesis project, leading to a report advocating for plain packaging in India, based on evidence from other jurisdictions and local market research.

Evaluating implementation

The report's launch and subsequent legislative proposals underscored the potential for policy change. However, progress has been slowed by various contextual barriers, including political changes and opposition from the tobacco industry.

Results and key findings

The study highlights the challenges of implementing public health policies in diverse settings, particularly the need for local evidence and the importance of considering the local context alongside international expertise.

Strengths and limitations

The case study's strengths lie in its comprehensive approach and stakeholder engagement. Limitations are primarily due to contextual barriers such as political opposition and the tobacco industry's resistance.

Success factors and challenges

Key to the study's initial success were the strategic [engagement of stakeholders](#) and the involvement of credible figures. The main challenges include the demand for local evidence and navigating the political and industrial landscape.

Next steps

Future directions include conducting further research to gather local evidence, aiming to strengthen the argument for plain packaging and facilitate its adoption in India.

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Key learning objectives

1. Recognize the need for localized evidence when adopting evidence-based policies like tobacco plain packaging in diverse settings.
2. Understand how strategic engagement with credible stakeholders can help overcome resistance and build momentum for policy change.

3. Learn how political changes and opposition from powerful industries, like tobacco, can slow down policy implementation.
4. Understand that further research is necessary to gather local evidence and strengthen the case for policy adoption in India.