Assessment of health warning label compliance on bidi packages in five states in India
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Background
• Bidi is the most commonly smoked tobacco product in India. According to recent GATS report, 7.7% of all adults currently smoke bidis
• Aligning with the FCTC guidelines, India has been successful in passing a strong packaging and labeling law for all tobacco products
• Most recently, health warning label (HWL) requirements were set to cover 85% of the principal display on both sides of the tobacco pack
• **Objective:** Examine the level of compliance of HWL on bidi packs with the Indian packaging and labeling law

Methods
• In 2017, a systematic protocol was used to collect unique bidi packages from cities with a population under 50,000 in 5 states: Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan, and Karnataka
• To assess compliance, we used 3 independent indicator variables:
  1. **Warning location:** Located on top (widest) edge of the pack; and, diametrically opposite in case of cone/cylinder
  2. **Warning size:** 85% of the principal display area covered by the HWL with 60% covered by the pictogram and 25% covered by the HWL text, and a minimum of 3.5 cm wide and 4 cm tall
  3. **Health warning label elements:** complete, free of distortion, 4-color graphic HWL, warning text printed in a single language on each side, with HWL text in contrasting background color
• Packs were double coded and analyzed

Results

**Key Findings:**
• 71 state-unique bidi packs were purchased; All had an Indian HWL, but 39 did not have appropriate in-rotation HWL
• Of 32 packages that had the correct HWL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Number of Packs</th>
<th>% compliant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Warning location</td>
<td>0/32</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Warning size</td>
<td>1/32</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Label elements</td>
<td>2/32</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Overall, no pack complied with all three compliance indicators

**Additional Compliance Issues**
• Image distortion and poor printing quality: 69% (n=22) packs had distorted HWL images, that is they were either blurry, faded or had heavy tint, making the HWL appear unclear
• Obstructed HWL: 53% (n=17) packs had HWLs obstructed by product wrapping
• Out of rotation graphic HWL images: 55% (n=39) did not have appropriate in-rotation HWL

**Conclusion**
• Findings suggest that bidi manufacturers are not complying with India’s HWL law
• The non-standardized cone shape of many bidi packs adds complexity to meeting all HWL requirements.
• The government could consider requiring box shaped packs for bidis
• Better enforcement is required to ensure that in-rotation HWLs are being used and that the printing quality is sufficient
• Although the Indian law aligns well with the FCTC, this limited implementation undermines the potential health benefits of HWLs

References
1. Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. Global Adult Tobacco Survey GATS 2 India 2016-17

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