In November 2016, India’s health warning labels (HWLs) – which fulfill the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Article 11 minimum requirements – included the following:

1. **Warning location** - Located at the top edge of the pack on both sides (diametrically opposite if pack is cylindrical)
2. **Warning size** - HWL must cover 85 percent on both sides of the package
3. **Label elements** - Full color graphic with warning text in a single language on each side of the pack with “Warning” printed in white on a red background and the remaining text in white on a black background
4. **Text size** - The warning message must cover 25 percent on both sides of the package

**Methods:**
In November 2016, we implemented a systematic protocol to collect unique smokeless tobacco (SLT) products from four cities in India: Mumbai; New Delhi; Chennai; and, Bengaluru. Fifty-four SLT products were double coded and assessed for compliance with the HWL policy in place at the time of collection.

**Results:**
It is noteworthy that the only pack that was compliant with all 4 indicators was a box shaped package, as opposed to cylinder (n=5) or sachet (n=48) package types.

Only seven percent (4/54) had HWL coverage of more than 80 percent on both sides of the package.
About TPackSS
The Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health developed the Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS) project to monitor whether required health warnings on tobacco packages are being implemented as intended, and to identify pack features and marketing appeals that might violate or detract from country tobacco packaging laws in these countries.

India needs to monitor on a regular basis whether SLT manufacturing companies are complying with the packaging and labeling laws in India. Although the Indian law aligns well with the FCTC guidelines, this deficit in implementation diminishes the potential health benefits of graphic warning labels on tobacco products.

The work was supported with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (www.bloomberg.org)