

The impact of the WHO FCTC on tobacco control: Perspectives from stakeholders in 12 countries

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Abstract

Background: The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), the first WHO treaty, entered into force in 2005. In April 2015, a seven-member independent expert group (EG) was established by a decision of the FCTC Conference of the Parties to assess the impact of the Treaty in its first decade. One component of the EG's methodology was to gather evidence on WHO FCTC impact from Parties themselves. This paper presents findings from 12 country missions on how the FCTC impacted progress on tobacco control.

Methods: Between November 2015 and May 2016, EG members conducted missions in 12 countries representing each of the six WHO regions and the four World Bank economic development levels. In each country, the EG interviewed a broad range of stakeholders to assess the extent to which the FCTC had contributed to tobacco control. The primary objective was to assess whether tobacco control measures would have been developed or passed, or implemented at all, or as quickly, if there had been no FCTC. Through this counterfactual inquiry, the EG sought to determine the FCTC's causal role.

Conclusion: The FCTC was reported to have made contributions along the entire policy/regulation process: the development of a measure, building legislative and political support for a measure and its implementation. These stakeholder perspectives support the conclusion that the FCTC has played a pivotal role in accelerating and strengthening the implementation of tobacco control measures, although tobacco industry interference continues to be a significant obstacle to further advancement.

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