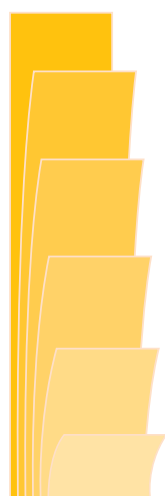




Introduction

The needs assessment mission for the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) was conducted July 1-9, 2013, by the Convention Secretariat jointly with the Ministry of Health of the Gabonese Republic. The international team, which came at the government's invitation, included representatives of the WHO Country Office in Gabon. The team met with the leaders of government agencies, NGOs and civil society who are involved in implementing the WHO FCTC at country level.

Tobacco control milestones in Gabonese Republic



- 1995** Agir pour le Gabon is founded.
- 2003** The Gabonese Republic signs the WHO FCTC.
- 2005** People's Health Movement in Gabon is founded.
- 2009** The Gabonese Republic ratifies the WHO FCTC.
- 2009** The WHO FCTC enters into force in the Gabonese Republic.
- 2013** The Tobacco Control Act.

Pioneer

The Gabonese Republic was among the first 40 countries to sign the WHO FCTC.



Gabon was the first country in Africa and the second in the world to become a Party to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

Key facts

All **tobacco products** are subject to an

18%

ad valorem tax.



All **tobacco products** are subject to a

30%

excise tax.



Cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, smoking tobacco and chewing tobacco are subject to a

30%

import levy.



There is a **Community Integration Tax** of

1%.



Imported tobacco products, other than those listed above, are subject to an overall tax of

70.19%.

60%
65%

of the front and of the back of **cigarette packs** are required to be covered by warnings.



14.7%

of **male youths** from 14 to 22 years old smoke **cigarettes.**



Smoking prevalence **increases** by age among youths

6.4%

of those aged **14 to 16** years old smoke,



7.6%

of **female youths** from 14 to 22 years old smoke **cigarettes.**



10.2%

of those aged **17 to 19** years old smoke,

13.3%

of those aged **20 to 22** years old smoke.

12.1%

of **adults** aged 16 to 64 smoke **tobacco**, of whom **19.7%** are **men** and **4.6%** are **women.**



Main findings and recommendations

● Public health is one of the priorities in the President's Emerging Gabon initiative, which is the Gabonese Republic's strategic plan for 2011-2016. Tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke are identified as major risk factors contributing to noncommunicable diseases in the National Health Development Plan for 2011-2015. The Gabonese Republic has not developed a comprehensive, multisectoral national action plan to implement the WHO FCTC.

Recommendation: Develop an action plan, including clear mandates and responsibilities, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

● The Director of Mental Health, Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Control serves as the national tobacco control focal point. No additional staff and no office space have been allocated to this program and there is no separate budget line in the Ministry of Health dedicated to tobacco control and WHO FCTC implementation.

Recommendation: Provide the necessary staff, space and funding.

● The Tobacco Control Act, which is expected to enter into force soon, provides for the establishment of a National Tobacco Control Commission led by the Prime Minister.

Recommendation: The National Tobacco Control Commission should be established once the Tobacco Control Act is enacted and it should include representatives from all relevant ministries and agencies, as well as representatives of NGOs active in tobacco control.

Post needs assessment assistance available from the Convention Secretariat

● Supporting the development of a national tobacco control strategy/action plan.

● Supporting the development of a media strategy and broadcast materials for national radio and television.

● Supporting and facilitating a stakeholder meeting to consider the Needs Assessment, the national tobacco control strategy or action plan and the establishment of a National Tobacco Control Commission.

● Facilitating technical support in tobacco taxation policy.

The tobacco industry tried to interfere in the national tobacco legislation process but did not succeed due to the government's and legislature's strong political commitment. The Tobacco Control Act bans such interference.

Recommendation: Develop detailed regulations and decrees to strengthen implementation of the ban on tobacco industry interference.

● The National Assembly and Senate have passed the Tobacco Control Act and it is awaiting the President's signature to become law. The Tobacco Control Act is comprehensive and addresses most articles of the WHO FCTC. It provides for the establishment of a National Tobacco Control Commission, bans tobacco industry interference in public health policies, includes smoke-free policies and establishes packaging and labeling requirements and restrictions on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

Recommendation: Promulgate the Tobacco Control Act and enact regulations and decrees for its implementation, as well as strengthening it in certain areas at a later stage.

● The Gabonese Republic recognizes the importance of price and tax measures to achieve WHO FCTC goals. There has been a slight increase in tobacco taxes in recent years, though these taxes could be raised further.

Recommendation: Regularly increase tobacco tax rates to reduce tobacco product affordability.

● The Gabonese Republic has conducted a number of education and awareness-raising activities about the harmful effects of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke, though there is not sufficient funding to meet obligations under the WHO FCTC.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Health should work closely with the Ministry of Digital Economy, Communication and Post, as well as other ministries and civil society organizations, to develop and implement evidence-based education and public awareness programs, including free air time on national radio and television for anti-tobacco messages.

● The Gabonese Republic was among the first signatories of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, though it has not yet ratified it.

Recommendation: Ratify the Protocol as soon as possible.

● The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is a strategic program framework developed by the Gabonese Republic and the UN system to outline national development priorities. The current UNDAF covers the period from 2012 to 2016.

Recommendation: Include implementation of the WHO FCTC as a UNDAF priority.

Outcomes



- 1) The needs assessment exercise has been very beneficial to Gabon. It helped to identify gaps and provided a better understanding of how to move forward.
- 2) After the mission, the Tobacco Control Act was quickly passed and a strategic plan for tobacco control was developed.
- 3) Five decrees related to the Act were adopted, covering the establishment of a coordinating mechanism, protection against tobacco industry interference, packaging and labelling, smoke-free public spaces, and a ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship.