



10-14 JUNE
2013

Mauritius

NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION



FCTC
WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
ON TOBACCO CONTROL
SECRETARIAT

Introduction

The needs assessment mission for the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) was conducted June 10-14, 2013, by the Convention Secretariat jointly with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life of the Republic of Mauritius. The international team, which came at the government's invitation, included representatives of the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO). The team met with the leaders of government agencies, NGOs and civil society who are involved in implementing the WHO FCTC at country level.

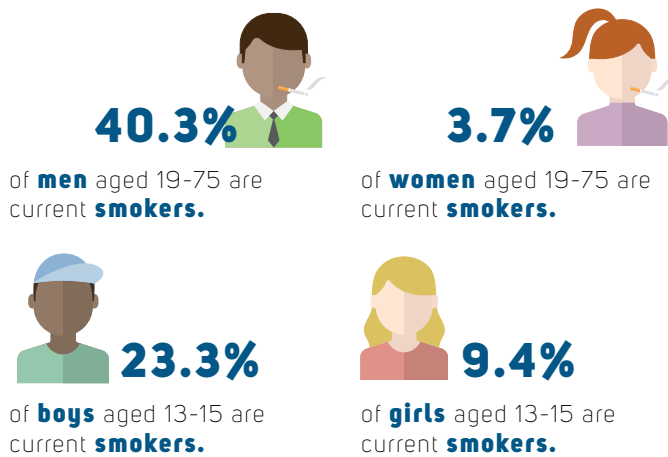
Tobacco control milestones in Mauritius

- 1999** Circular from the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.
- 2004** Mauritius ratifies the WHO FCTC – it is the 15th country in the world to do so.
- 2005** The WHO FCTC enters into force.
- 2005** Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2005.
- 2008** Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations of 2008.
- 2009** Mauritius becomes the first African country to require pictorial warnings.
- 2012** Consumer Protection Act.

Farmers are successfully moving to other crops

Significant progress has been made in phasing out tobacco cultivation since the last manufacturing plant was closed in 2008. Tobacco growers have successfully shifted to producing vegetables and livestock, taking advantage of financial incentives and technical advice from the government.

Key facts



Between 2008 and 2012 the specific **excise tax** applied to **cigarettes** was **increased** by

61%

92%

of **smokers** and

98%

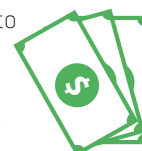
of **non-smokers** support a complete ban on smoking in all **workplaces and public places**.



Prices for the **three best-selling brands** range from

Rs 105 to **Rs 130**

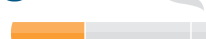
per pack of 20.



The per capita consumption of **cigarettes** decreased from

1056 in 2009 to

798 in 2012



Only

47%

of smokers reported that **smoking bans** were "totally" **enforced**.

65%

of the **retail price** of the most-consumed brand consists of **taxes**.



52%

of current **smokers** aged 13-15 are able to buy their own **cigarettes** in **shops**.



Main findings and recommendations

● Mauritius has passed several laws to control tobacco, including the Public Health (Restrictions on Tobacco Products) Regulations of 2008, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2005 and the Consumer Protection Act of 2012. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is currently developing a new set of Public Health Regulations.

Recommendation: Complete the new Public Health Regulations as soon as possible to ensure full compliance with the WHO FCTC. Strengthen enforcement of measures that have already been enacted. Consider codifying the existing tobacco laws into a single statute.

● The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is consulting relevant stakeholders to finalize the new National Action Plan on Tobacco Control 2013-2016.

Recommendation: Complete this action plan as soon as possible and provide adequate funding to implement it.

● A tobacco control unit with two full-time staff members has been established. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has set up a National Steering Committee on Tobacco, with the participation of various government sectors.

Recommendation: Strengthen the operation of the Committee by developing terms of reference for it and holding more frequent meetings (3-4 per year). Review membership to ensure that all relevant sectors and partners are represented.

Post needs assessment assistance available from the Convention Secretariat

● Supporting and facilitating a stakeholder workshop to consider the needs assessment report and the National Tobacco Control Strategic Plan.

● Supporting finalization of the Strategic Plan.

● Providing immediate support for any priorities

identified by the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

● Facilitating inclusion of WHO FCTC implementation in the United Nations strategic framework document.

● Providing technical assistance in the development of a media strategy and audiovisual materials for state radio and television.

An explicit provision that prohibits the tobacco industry and its affiliates from influencing public health policy has not yet been included in any of the normative documents in effect.

Recommendation: Include the obligations under Article 5.3 and the guidelines for its implementation in the tobacco control regulatory framework.

● Mauritius has implemented price and tax measures to reduce tobacco demand in recent years. The Ministry of Finance is committed to continuing to pursue this objective.

Recommendation: Ensure that increased tax rates apply to all tobacco products to avoid people shifting to cheaper tobacco alternatives. Increase the price of tobacco products above the rate of inflation.

● Smoking in public places is regulated by the Public Health Regulations of 2008 and the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2005. There are inconsistencies between these two laws, which results in the overall regulatory framework not meeting WHO FCTC requirements.

Recommendation: Eliminate the inconsistency between the existing laws to ensure complete protection from tobacco smoke for the entire population.

● Mauritius does not yet require testing and measuring the ingredients in tobacco products, though this is referred to in the draft National Action Plan 2013-2016.

Recommendation: Include these measures in the law currently being drafted that will establish the National Agricultural Products Regulatory Office.

● Mauritius has implemented pictorial health warnings covering 60% of the front and 70% of the back surfaces of cigarette packages.

Recommendation: Impose similar requirements for all tobacco products, not just cigarettes. Rotate or change the warnings more frequently to prevent decreased impact.

● Public education and tobacco awareness programs have been implemented, but youth smoking continues to rise.

Recommendation: Use segmented strategies targeted at young people.

● Tobacco cessation guidelines have been prepared, seven smoking cessation clinics have been opened and an Infoline has been established to help smokers reach the services. The necessary services and medications are provided free of charge.

Recommendation: Include brief advice in primary healthcare services to ensure better accessibility and upgrade the Infoline into a proactive Quitline.

● Authorities in Mauritius are convinced of the efficiency of the existing system to control illicit trade in tobacco products.

Recommendation: Consider ratifying the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

● Existing regulations prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors but there is anecdotal evidence that compliance is inadequate, especially at points of sale.

Recommendation: Strengthen enforcement of the prohibition against selling tobacco to minors, especially concerning single stick sales.

Outcomes



1) The needs assessment mission was very beneficial to the Republic of Mauritius.

2) The exercise helped to involve different stakeholders in the implementation of the WHO FCTC and in the finalization of the Strategic Plan.

3) After the mission there was an increase in awareness about the harms of tobacco, especially amongst youth.

4) A research project was implemented, which provided more evidence about the impact of taxation on consumption of tobacco products.