



## Launch of the Australia-India Institute Taskforce on Tobacco Control's Policy Document on Plain Packaging for All Tobacco Products in India on July 23, 2012

### *FAQs on Plain Packaging of Tobacco Products in India*

#### **Q.1 What exactly is plain packaging?**

Plain packaging is a public health policy legislative intervention designed to **combat** the misleading nature of tobacco product packaging and to *heighten* the effects of pictorial health warnings. It is the removal of extraneous colors, embossing, and misleading terms like *'Ultra mild', 'Honey dew' 'Silky smooth' etc.* on a tobacco product package. At present, product packaging helps tobacco firms to not only retain existing users but promote the brand and even create "incidental brand encounters" to affect the buying patterns of non-users who see that package. Plain packaging fights this and also amplifies the effects of pictorial health warnings which depict the serious health risks of consuming tobacco products. Plain packaging thus eliminates the "badge value" of the external packaging.

**Plain packaging legislation** prohibits the use of logos, colours, brand images and promotional information on the external packaging of all tobacco products. However, all brand and product names *can be used*, but only in a standardized, prescribed style, font and color. Australia, in a landmark move, is the first country to pass legislation on plain packaging to be enforced from December 2012.

#### **Q.2 What is the urgency for plain packaging in India?**

**One million Indians die every year** from tobacco consumption, and according to the Tobacco Atlas (citing the Planning Commission's data) US\$ 6.32 billion is spent in the annual health care costs due to **just three** tobacco-related diseases (cancer, coronary artery disease and chronic obstructive lung disease). Compared to this, the Government of India annually collects only \$1.62 billion in revenues, largely from the taxation of cigarettes. Worse still, direct expenditures on tobacco impoverish nearly 15 million people in India, most of who are already poor.

Despite many restrictions on the tobacco industry – bans on advertising and sponsorships, for example – the tobacco product package itself continues to be a potent tool to promote and attract new users, especially vulnerable groups like youth and women. How? Studies have shown that attractive packaging, brand images, bright colors, logos and misleading terms have a seductive effect on impressionable consumers, many of whom are illiterate.

### **Q.3 What is the Australia-India Institute (AII) Taskforce on Tobacco Control?**

HRIDAY (Health-Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth), International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and The Nossal Institute for Global Health at the University of Melbourne have collaborated under the Australia India Institute (AII) Taskforce to make the case for the introduction of plain packaging for tobacco products in India. The Taskforce is chaired by Prof. K. Srinath Reddy, PHFI and Prof. Robert Moodie, School of Population Health, University of Melbourne, Australia, who guided a team of tobacco control experts from both India and Australia.

### **Q.4 What is the Australia-India Institute (AII) Taskforce recommending to the Government of India?**

The AII Taskforce on Tobacco Control examined the feasibility of plain packaging of tobacco products in the Indian context. The policy recommendations of the Taskforce will be launched in the form of a policy document on July 23, 2012 in New Delhi in the presence of policymakers, civil society partners and media.

### **Q.5 Will plain packaging work in India?**

Yes! The partners in this Taskforce have conducted an original market research study in India which has revealed important data and evidence on the viability of plain packaging for Indian tobacco products. The results of this study are a part of the policy document and will be released to the media on the day of the launch.

### **Q.6 What might the Indian plain packs look like?**

The proposed design of Indian plain packs will be shared during the launch event on July 23, 2012. For maximal impact it will be a single drab colour surrounding the pictorial and written health warnings. Market research will help inform the most appropriate design. It will apply to all forms of tobacco products, if legislated.

The Australian packages can be seen at <http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/content/plainpack-tobacco>.

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