Title
A Report on Smoking Advertising and Promotion Bans in The Islamic Republic of Iran

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Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a country of 1 648 000 square kilometres, with a population of some 70 000 000. Before the Islamic revolution in 1979, the country had a national State-owned tobacco monopoly which was responsible for producing tobacco products for domestic consumption as well as importing different tobacco brands into the country. There are no data available on tobacco product smuggling before the revolution. While the tobacco monopoly continued following the revolution, the importation of tobacco products ceased.

Although there was no tobacco advertising on radio or television before the revolution, advertising and promotion of various cigarette brands was displayed on billboards throughout the country, in the streets and on highways, in public spaces, public transport vehicles and in movies as a sign of prestige.

Smoking was not prohibited in public areas; public transport vehicles and work places and smokers smoked freely in all such areas. There was no legislation on the various aspects of smoking, including production, distribution, retail and advertising. After the revolution, a group of experts, among them physicians, pharmacists, religious leaders, traders and other social groups, came together from a religious and social health standpoint to combat smoking and cigarette companies. They understood that smoking was highly dangerous to people’s health.

These actors began lobbying the country’s leaders to persuade them to restrict tobacco production and smoking in public places as well as ban tobacco advertising and promotion. Their activities resulted in the proposal How to gradually decrease and eliminate tobacco smoking, which was introduced to parliament and passed by the parliamentary delegates in 1992 and became law. However, the Guardian council, which is responsible for reviewing laws passed by the parliament to ensure that they do not violate the Islamic Republic of Iran’s constitution and religious laws, rejected it on the grounds that it violated the country’s constitution because certain parts of the law imposed a financial burden on the Government.

Description of the intervention policy

While the 1992 Guardian Council proposal was rejected, in line with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s policy to prohibit any kind of tobacco product advertising and promotion, the Council of Ministries approved a number of regulations, which are mentioned below:

Approval by the Council of Ministries

A: A plan for how to decrease smoking
(Date: 3 September 1994)

Article 4: Any activity and propaganda that results in people being encouraged or motivated to smoke is prohibited at all the ministries, Government organizations and institutes, Islamic revolutionary institutions, municipalities, and departments to which the application of the law involves mentioning the names, and at the office buildings affiliated with them.

Article 6: The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Industries will be responsible for supervising the proper implementation of these regulations and for codifying appropriate circulars within the limits of the laws.

B: Regulations relating to “The ban on smoking and supply of cigarettes and other tobacco products in public places” (Date: 4 January 1997)

Article 2: To prevent youth from becoming addicted and to elucidate smoking’s damage to health as well as the financial and social harm done by smoking, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, along with cultural departments and municipalities will be required to prevent any act and propaganda that results in people being encouraged or motivated to smoke or further consume tobacco. They will be required to embark on preparing regular, coordinated and appropriate cultural and propaganda programmes for the public, especially youth, that show disapproval of smoking and elucidate the harm done by it. These agencies are to take necessary measures to ensure that this law is properly implemented.

Note 2. Any propaganda and activity that will result in the public being encouraged to smoke, will be prohibited.

Article 3: The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, the Ministry of Cultural and Islamic Guidance, municipalities and the mass media must take necessary measures to ensure that smoking is not directly or indirectly encouraged in their work, publications, films and serials, which includes ensuring that the leading characters in their films do not smoke.

Advertising bans cover both direct and indirect activities, which promote and encourage smoking among people. Other policies such as prohibition of smoking in public
places and prohibition of purchase of tobacco products by youth under 18 years of age are enforced at the same time. In addition, smoking cessation clinics will offer their consultative services to help smokers quit.

**Steps toward implementation**

Following the approval of “A plan for how to decrease smoking” (Date: 3 September 1994) and “A ban on smoking cigarettes and other tobacco products in public places” (Date: 4 January 1997), these regulations had to be implemented by the different ministries and organizations, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, the Ministry of Cultural and Islamic Guidance, municipalities and the mass media. The Anti-smoking National Committee of the Ministry of Health assumed the role of observing and following up on the proper implementation of these regulations at the national level. There was no opposition to these regulations in the country since the Government had a monopoly on the tobacco industry.

**Table 1**

Smoking prevalence by sex and age in the Islamic Republic of Iran 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (year)</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-39</th>
<th>40-69</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-smoker</td>
<td>3568</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>4982</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9 cig/day</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19 cig/day</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20 cig/day</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3968</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5016</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2**

Smoking prevalence by sex and age in the Islamic Republic of Iran 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (Year)</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-39</th>
<th>40-69</th>
<th>&gt;70</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-smoker</td>
<td>4922</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>6749</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>3663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9 cig/day</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19 cig/day</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20 cig/day</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5299</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6761</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The intervention’s success

The prohibition of smoking advertising has been a very successful policy and was well received by the communities. Indeed, there is no direct or indirect advertising and promotion of tobacco products and there is no tobacco sponsorship of sports or cultural programmes throughout the country.

Since the Islamic revolution, transnational tobacco-producing companies have had no economic support for their products in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The national tobacco industry is not allowed to engage in any promotional or advertising activities within the country.

Based on statistics published by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education in 1991, 14.6% of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s population were smokers and in 1999 this rate decreased to 11.7%. Tables 1 and 2 show smoking prevalence by age and sex in the Islamic Republic of Iran between 1991 and 1999. As these tables demonstrate, smoking prevalence has decreased among males from 27.2% in 1991 to 24% in 1999 and from 3.4% to 1.5% among females in the same period.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, since the Islamic revolution no foreign industries have been permitted activities within the tobacco industry and national media has not been permitted to promote and advertise tobacco products. Therefore, it is not possible to estimate the financial loss incurred by the media and other enterprises.

A comprehensive ban on tobacco product advertising was a successful policy thanks to the collaboration of all the organizations involved in the implementation of the Council of Ministries’ decision.

Indeed, there was no opposition to this policy because international corporations do not have any activities within the country and the tobacco industry is entirely run by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The result of all these policies has been a decline in smoking prevalence from 1991 to 1999. In the end, the Ministry of Health strongly opposed privatization of the tobacco industry because it facilitates the entrance of transnational companies into the country. These companies would begin opposing the restrictions on advertisement of their products, which would eventually increase tobacco use in the Islamic Republic of Iran.