

# The Implementation of India's Gutka Bans

## What Happens When an Existing Tobacco Product is Removed from the Marketplace?

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### Background and Challenges to Implementation

- Gutka is a common form of smokeless tobacco consumed in India: a mix of tobacco, spices and sweeteners.
- India has 86 percent of the world's oral cancer cases and faces nearly 80,000 new cases each year.
- State-level laws banning the production, distribution and sale of gutka currently exist in India.
- The objectives of these laws are to reduce gutka use and improve public health.
- Tobacco control policy implementation can be challenging and little is known about how to best approach implementation.
- We sought to explore several critical factors related to policy implementation in different jurisdictions in India.



**Figure 1:** Colorful gutka packs on display prior to state-level laws banning the manufacturing, distribution and sale of gutka

### Results and Lessons Learned

Highlights from the interviews, as organized around the a priori determined factors, include:

#### Leadership/political will

- Unanimous agreement that political support is crucial in effective implementation
- Across the three jurisdictions, early stages of implementation saw high levels of political support, followed by a general waning

#### Social climate/social readiness

- The social opinion regarding gutka use has generally shifted from acceptance to support for the ban across the three jurisdictions
- Media has played a key role in informing the public about the negative health effects of gutka and in building support for the bans

#### Institutional capacity/operational effectiveness

- Low levels of implementation authority capacity were reported in each jurisdiction—a lack in human resources and operational guidelines were major concerns

**Table 1: Overview of findings from in-depth interviews by state/region**

Political will / leadership	Social climate norms	Institutional / operational effectiveness
<b>Delhi</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of existing bans and reports on positive outcomes important factors to convincing local implementation</li> <li>- Lack of ownership and operational guidelines are important factors leading to poor implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gutka still currently acceptable in most parts of jurisdiction</li> <li>- Misconception about gutka being “healthier” than smoked tobacco products</li> <li>- Little or no public resistance to ban</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ban notification in Delhi weaker than other jurisdictions</li> <li>- Shortage of staff in implementing authorities</li> <li>- Lack of ownership and operational guidelines are important factors leading to poor implementation</li> </ul>
<b>Maharashtra</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive advocacy from non-government groups was crucial in convincing decision makers to implement ban</li> <li>- Implementing authorities were supportive and helpful, and played proactive role in implementation</li> <li>- Tobacco industry interference reported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unanimous public support for ban</li> <li>- Mass media crucial in influencing public opinion on harmful effects of gutka use</li> <li>- Medical professionals played an active role in publicly campaigning in support of ban</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acute shortage of staff in implementing authorities</li> <li>- Need to develop formal indicators to evaluate effectiveness/impact of ban</li> <li>- Neighboring states need to also effectively implement restrictions</li> </ul>
<b>Gujarat</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Political will in jurisdiction has been key in effective enactment; however lackluster support since</li> <li>- Strong tobacco industry interference</li> <li>- Scientific evidence to support ban plays an important role in encouraging political will</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of gutka socially and culturally engrained in Gujarat</li> <li>- Mass media crucial in influencing public opinion on harmful effects of gutka use</li> <li>- Shift in consumption to other smokeless products noted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State not adequately equipped with necessary infrastructure to make ban successful</li> <li>- Acute shortage of staff in implementing authorities</li> <li>- Lack of coordination among concerned authorities</li> </ul>

### Methods

- In-depth interviews were conducted with key individuals involved in policy implementation from three different jurisdictions in India to understand implementation processes and learn any important implementation factors.
- The “Framework Approach,” a qualitative analysis process strongly informed by a priori reasoning and preset aims and objectives was used to analyze data and frame findings.

We tested several critical factors related to successful policy implementation, including:

1. Political will and leadership within the jurisdiction;
2. A social ‘readiness’ among the population for regulation; and
3. Government and/or NGO capacity to carry out policy implementation processes



**Figure 2:** Gutka packs



**Figure 3:** Gutka vendor in Delhi

### Conclusions and Key Recommendations

- Ensuring that people are aware of the health effects of gutka has been an important strategy to build support for laws banning the manufacturing, distribution and sale of gutka.
- Implementation of these laws could be improved with greater institutional capacity in states; including hiring adequate staff, having operational guidelines and full coordination between concerned authorities.
- Improving evaluation systems would support better implementation.
- Challenges exist when full implementation of laws does not occur in neighboring jurisdictions.