

TOBACCO CONTROL PROGRAMME OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, HEALTH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION UNIT

JAMAICA

Soroya Julian

Communications Consultant (Public Health and Social Marketing)

Summary

On 15 July 2013 Jamaica's new Public Health (Tobacco Control) Regulations entered into force. The strategy to promote acceptance of and compliance with the Regulations focuses on sensitizing internal and external stakeholders at the national and community levels. The health promotion strategy combines various approaches, including communication, entertainment/edutainment, legislation, social marketing and community outreach.

Keywords: communication, social marketing, message framing, health advocacy, health public policy, community empowerment

SETTING AND CONTEXT

The Ministry of Health of Jamaica has been committed to controlling tobacco use in the country through preventive strategies such as healthy lifestyle and chronic disease prevention programmes and anti-tobacco policies including tobacco product taxation. Jamaica formally signed and ratified the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), spearheaded by the World Health Organization, in 2003 and 2005 respectively.

Jamaica's new Public Health (Tobacco Control) regulations, which are fully in line with the relevant provisions of the WHO FCTC, stipulate the use of rotating pictorial health warnings that cover at least 60% of each principal display surface of tobacco product packaging, among the largest in the world; ban misleading statements on packaging; and prohibit smoking in public places, including all enclosed public places and workplaces. They also specify the penalties for offences committed under the regulations.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF PROGRAMME/ACTIVITY

The overall goal of the national communication/health promotion strategy for tobacco control is to promote acceptance of and compliance with the Public Health (Tobacco Control) Regulations.

The main objectives include:

- sensitizing internal stakeholders on the Public Health (Tobacco Control) Regulations and the key messages
- promoting key messages and relevant areas of Public Health Tobacco Regulations to external stakeholders.

In addition there is a broad objective for the field/community level, which is to collaborate with key parish level (internal and external) stakeholders in the development, execution and evaluation of a tobacco control education campaign aimed at increasing public and community awareness regarding prevention and cessation measures and the key messages relating to tobacco legislation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN FEATURES

The communication/health promotion strategy is implemented at the national and the community/field level. At the national level strategies include: use of mass media (national

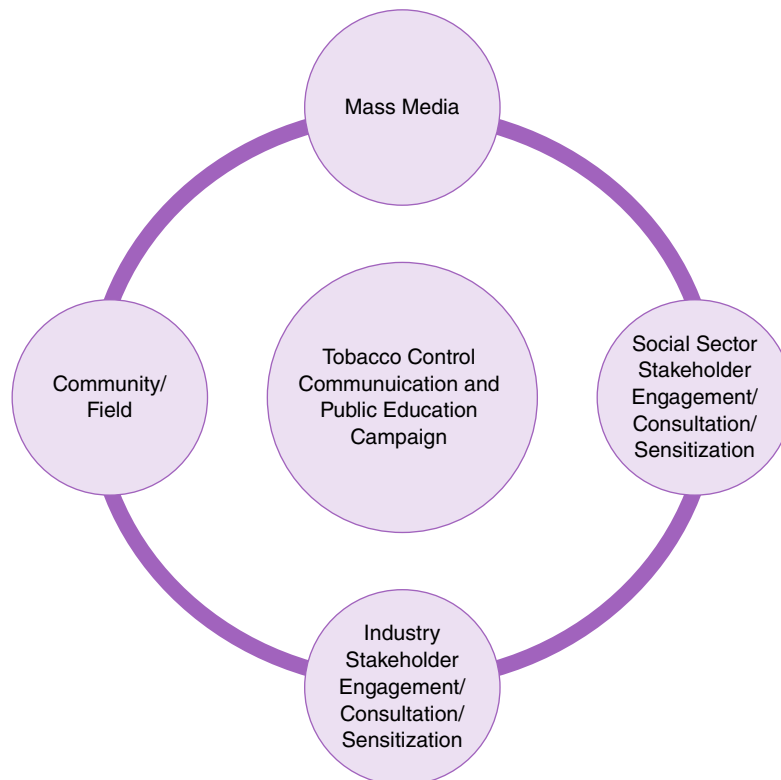


Figure 1 Overall health promotion campaign framework.

Source: Health, Promotion & Education Unit, Ministry of Health, Jamaica

and local print, radio and television); national stakeholder sensitization sessions (internal and external); use of special events and identification and promotion of places that sell 'no smoking' signs. At the community/field level strategies include: material development such as the creation of toolkits (presentations, educational materials, CDs and DVDs) for the field; sensitization sessions for healthcare workers; training of leaders and/or other key influential champions from targeted groups and utilization of special events to promote targeted messages. Target audiences include schools (youth), churches, workplaces, community groups, service groups, taxi associations and the general public.

The key messages promote:

1. knowledge of facts and statistics related to tobacco control, for example, the amount of chemicals in tobacco smoke
2. awareness that the Regulations exist to protect the health of children, workers and the general public
3. awareness that breathing secondhand smoke is smoking without a choice
4. awareness that smoking is banned in specified public places
5. the right of each person to a smoke free public place
6. smoking cessation services

The communication/health promotion strategy for tobacco is being implemented using a phased approach. In Phase One the national tobacco control communication team in conjunction with the Ministry of Health's Public Relations Unit created a display at the announcement of the new Regulations at Parliament during Sectoral Debate in June 2013. The display was created to sensitize persons to the harmful effects of smoking



Photograph of display at Sectoral debate presentation

Source: Health, Promotion and Education Unit, Ministry of Health, Jamaica

and highlight the graphic warnings that were to come into effect with the regulations. Media, including the two main national newspapers, covered this activity.

Phase Two involved sensitization of key stakeholders to the Public Health (Tobacco Control) Regulations 2013. Before the ban came into effect all Health Education Officers were sensitized to the different components of the Public Health (Tobacco Control) Regulations 2013.

In Phase Three the ban on smoking in public places came into effect on July 15 2013 and in Phase Four (August–September 2013) National Sensitization and Caribbean Wellness Day activities began. Caribbean Wellness Day focused on Tobacco Control as the theme with youth as the target audience. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), through partnership with the National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA) and The National Centre for Youth Development (NCYD), organized the event.

Phase Five (October–November 2013) involved regional sensitization workshops with stakeholder groups and workers. Phase 6 (November 2013–March 2014) will involve full community roll out of the campaign together with partners and key stakeholders and a strengthened education campaign for the public.

APPLICATION TO KEY PRINCIPLES OF HEALTH PROMOTION AND RELEVANT THEORY

The Jamaica national tobacco control communication/health promotion strategy can be applied to key principles and theories of health promotion. By targeting at the national and the community levels, the strategy involves the population as a whole while considering the cultural context, rather than targeting only individuals at risk for particular diseases. There is close cooperation of sectors within and beyond health services (non-governmental organizations, the media, private sector, regional organizations etc.), demonstrating the range of contexts that influence health. Health promotion values active public participation, which the Jamaican strategy achieved through stakeholder consultations. In addition, health professionals were able to develop their skills in education and health advocacy through island-wide workshops and training sessions.

The strategy combines various theoretic approaches including: communication (use of various media), entertainment/edutainment (educational content inserted into educational programmes) such as the development of DVDs for community use, legislation (promoting the new regulations), social marketing (marketing strategies to promote health) such as the use of ‘champions’ from target groups to promote messages, and community outreach through local and regional events.

KeyLinks

WHO (2003, 2005) *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control*. Available at: www.who.int/fctc/about/en