



Study Overview

The existence of the illicit cigarette trade in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is widely recognized and is a major concern. However, the phenomenon has so far remained insufficiently studied. This research, carried out by Development Gateway, Research Initiatives For Social Development, and Laboratory for Survey & Research for Development, in partnership with the University of Cape Town with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was undertaken as part of the Tobacco Control Data Initiative (TCDI) to fill this gap. The research is guided by two main questions, namely:

1. **What is the percentage of the illicit cigarette trade in the DRC?**
2. **What are the origins and brands of illicit cigarettes sold in the DRC?**

A combined qualitative and quantitative research approach was used to answer these questions. This report presents only the results of the quantitative research, as another report is dedicated to the results of the qualitative research.



Research Methodology

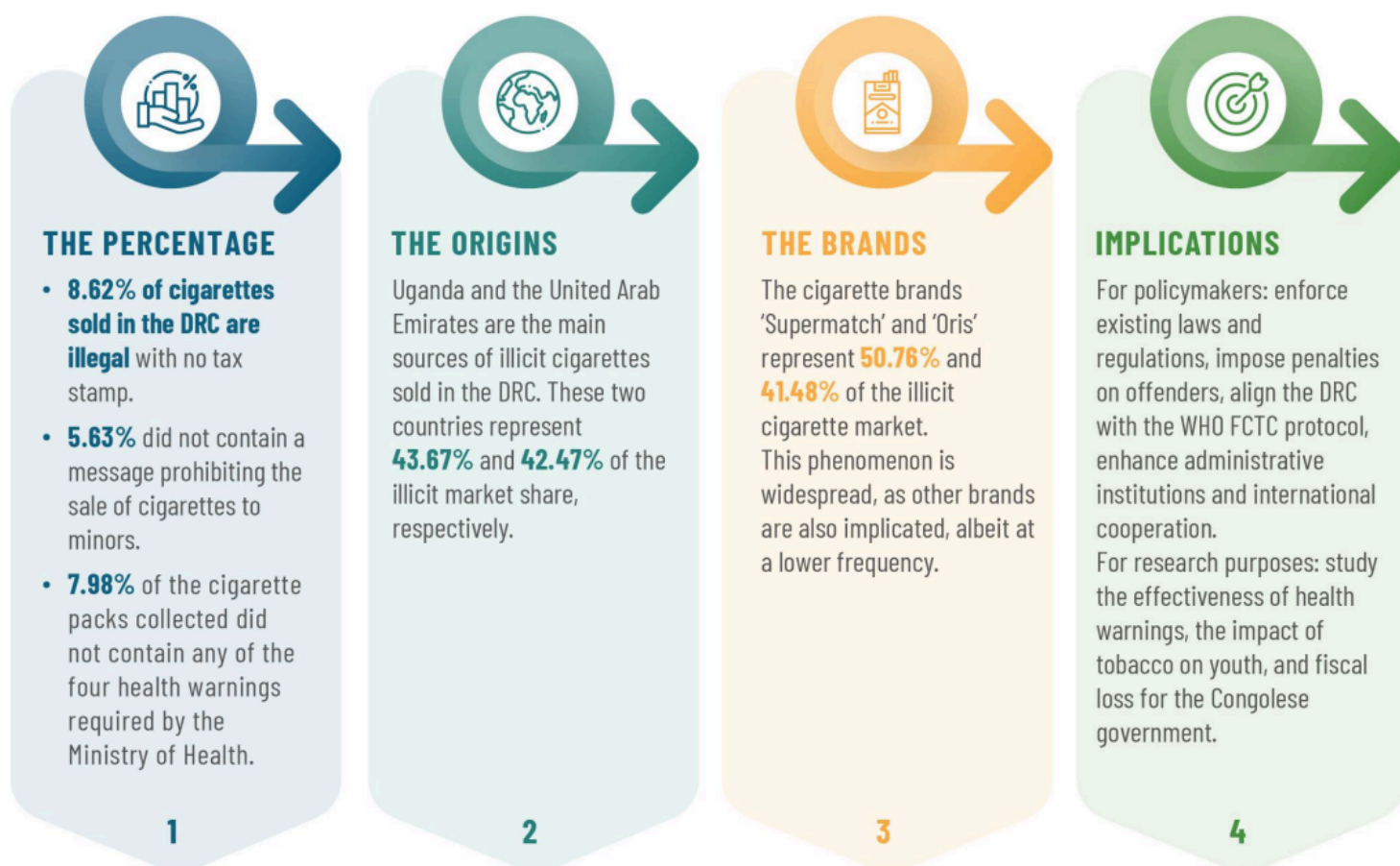
The methodology used consisted in collecting empty cigarette packs from garbage cans and streets, as well as from cigarette retailers, whether stationary or itinerant. This data collection was carried out in 32 health areas, divided into 16 health zones stratified into rural and urban areas. These health areas are located in 8 provinces, six of which are border areas and two of which are not. These 8 provinces were randomly selected from the country's 26 provinces.

Each cigarette pack collected was examined in order to collect and encode the information present on the packaging, including: brand name, tax stamp, health warning, instruction prohibiting the sale of cigarettes to and by minors, nicotine and tar content of cigarettes, as well as country of origin and name of manufacturer. Data were collected using the Survey CTO tool, then exported to Stata software for cleaning and analysis.



Main Results

- **The study analyzed 6,022 packs of cigarettes collected. It revealed that 8.62% of the cigarette market in the DRC is illicit.** Assuming that imported yellow-stamp packs are illicit, this rate rises drastically to 51.46%.
- **The results indicate that the more porous a province is, the more likely it is to be a breeding ground for the illicit cigarette trade. Furthermore, the weaker the province's institutions, the more prevalent the illicit cigarette trade.** Ituri province stands out with the highest rate of illicit trade, attributable to border factors, weak institutions, and socio-political instability.
- **As for the origin of illicit cigarettes found in the DRC, Uganda and the United Arab Emirates stand out as the main sources of illicit cigarettes. Together, they account for 84.03% of the illicit cigarette market in the DRC.** In terms of cigarette brands, "Supermatch" and "Oris" dominate the illicit market with a 90.4% share.
- **Other results show that 71.71% of packs bear the old yellow stamp, linked to the "Equateur", "Monte Carlo" and "Pall Mall" brands.**



Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has deepened our understanding of the illicit cigarette trade in the DRC. The implications for decision-makers are that strict action is needed, including effective enforcement of existing laws and regulations, and sanctions against offenders. Institutional strengthening, border controls and international cooperation are also recommended to combat this transnational problem.

The findings also suggest that the DRC ratify the WHO Protocol for the Elimination of Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. Stricter regulations and ongoing monitoring are needed to protect the health of consumers, especially young people. The implication of this study for practice is that it is essential to put in place ongoing monitoring and data collection mechanisms to track the evolution of illicit trade over time and better eradicate it. This study recommends that future research assess the effectiveness of current health warnings, cigarette consumption among young people, and the impact of lost tax revenues due to illicit cigarette trade.

The full report is available [here](#)