

Tobacco Control Asia Pacific Monthly Bulletin

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Press conference held on August 2, 2024

Highlights

Indonesia enforces stricter tobacco control with new regulation

Indonesia's Government Regulation Number 28 of 2024, signed by President Joko Widodo on July 26, 2024, imposes stricter tobacco controls. It includes a smoking ban in various public spaces, requires health facilities to offer cessation support, increases health warning coverage on packaging from 40% to 50%, and bans tobacco advertising on social media and within 500 meters of playgrounds and educational institutions. The minimum purchase age is raised from 18 to 21, and sales near educational institutions and playgrounds are prohibited.

The regulation, which has been widely praised by civil society, aims to combat high smoking rates and improve public health. On August 2, 2024, a press conference highlighted its significance. During the event, Dr. Emma Rachmawati emphasized its role in guiding health programs, while Seto Mulyadi and Ildhal Kasim stressed the importance of strict enforcement. Dr. Mukhaer Pakkana noted its importance for child protection and long-term public health.

Indonesia: The Udayana Central, a grantee of Vital Strategies, developed a database of actors promoting harm reduction through the use of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products. Key facts from this database were compiled into a factsheet, which was disseminated in Jakarta. This initiative engaged officials from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, Ministry of Communication and Information, Ministry of Home Affairs, as well as representatives from civil society, professional associations, and NGOs.

Timor-Leste: In August 2024, the National Alliance for Tobacco Control, in collaboration with the University of Dili, launched a report on the relationship between lifestyle and smoking behavior among young people aged 13-17 in Timor-Leste. This was the first study of its kind in the country to explore this connection. The launch event was attended by enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Prime Minister's Office, universities, the National Public Health Institute, civil society partners, and the media.



Report launching ceremony on relationship between lifestyle and smoking behavior among youths

Protecting people from tobacco smoke



Advancing subnational smokefree in Ponorogo Regency

Indonesia: Ponorogo Regency in East Java province has implemented a smokefree policy, banning smoking in all public places, workplaces, and public transport, protecting 949,320 residents. Leaders and policymakers from 18 cities and districts received technical assistance to develop and implement local tobacco control policies. By July, 358 out of 514 cities and districts adopted 100% smokefree policies, protecting 209 millions of Indonesia's 266 millions people.

- In Pontianak, 18 civil police were trained on smokefree implementation and Ministry of Health's dashboard.
- In Makassar, 19 community health centre staff were trained to implement smokefree.

Philippines: On July 3, 2024, the Kapangan Municipal Health Office, in collaboration with Transcend, conducted an MPOWER Orientation at the Rural Health Unit Building in Lomon, Kapangan, Benguet. The training was attended by Mayor Manny Fermin and Dr. Mary Joy Fermin, who both expressed strong support for the rigorous enforcement of Municipal Ordinance No. 194 s. 2023, also known as the Comprehensive Smoke-Free Ordinance of Kapangan, to ensure the well-being of the community.

The Smoke-Free Aklan team conducted the Enforcers and Deputation Training on July 4-5, 2024, in Balete. The event was attended by Municipal Mayor, Municipal Auxiliary Police, Barangay Tanods, Barangay Captains, Barangay Health Workers, and Public Health Nurses. The training aimed to enhance the enforcement of the Anti-Smoking Municipal Ordinance through stricter implementation.

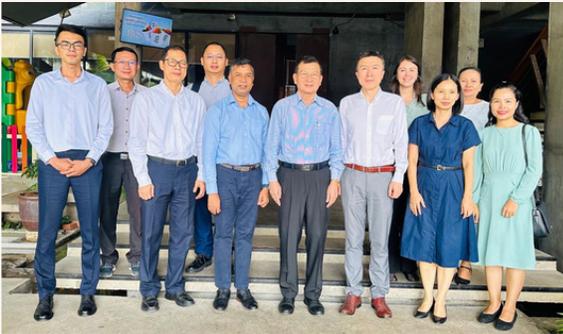
The Strategic Communications Planning Workshop for Tobacco Control was held on July 2, 17-18, 2024, with the goal of engaging the youth sector in promoting a smoke-free environment and reducing vape use among young people. The workshop was attended by 21 officers from the Sangguniang Kabataan Federation and Youth Development Offices of Local Government Units (LGUs). The final Communication Plan will be presented on August 2, with several strategies slated for implementation later this year.



MPOWER Orientation in Kapangan Municipality



Enforcers and Deputation Training in Balete



Visit by Vital Strategies team to discuss tobacco cessation program in Cambodia

Cambodia: Vital Strategies team, led by Dr. Gan Quan and Dr. Tara Singh Bam visited Cambodia to discuss the country's tobacco cessation program. Hosted by National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP), they conducted a field visit to Krang Thnong Health Center in Phnom Penh to observe the daily routines of health professionals and explore how to integrate tobacco cessation records into primary healthcare. The objectives for the new cessation proposal include: adopting national smoking cessation policies and an implementation plan, incorporating smoking status into medical records, and integrating smoking cessation efforts into the tuberculosis control program.

Additionally, NCHP had conducted a meeting with the Digital Health Department of Ministry of Health explored integrating tobacco quit lines into the 115 hotline. The discussion focused on understanding the 115 hotline's current operations and evaluating how to incorporate quit lines to enhance support for smoking cessation.

Warning about the dangers of tobacco

Nepal: On August 14, 2024, a technical working committee meeting on the rotation of Pictorial Health Warnings (PHW) in Nepal was held at the National Health Education, Information and Communication Centre, Ministry of Health. The meeting focused on Article 9 of the Tobacco Control and Management Act 2068, particularly regarding PHW rotation. It was agreed that the Ministry of Health and Action Nepal would collaborate, with Action Nepal handling research and technical activities. Both partners will work together on amending regulatory directives. The meeting included ministry officials and representatives from Action Nepal.



Technical Working Committee meeting on rotation of Pictorial Health Warning



Data collection to assess the effectiveness of PHW rotation and Plain Packaging

Nepal: Staff from Action Nepal worked across various survey sites to collect data for identifying effective Pictorial Health Warnings (PHWs) for rotation and researching the impact of Plain Packaging. Surveys are being conducted in the seven provincial capitals of Nepal, as well as 3 districts, including Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. The results of these surveys will be shared with relevant government agencies and partner organizations involved in tobacco control efforts.

Enforcing tobacco advertising, promotion & sponsorship bans

Cambodia: National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP) recently conducted inspections in 5 out of the 12 districts and 10 out of the 105 villages in Phnom Penh to identify violations of the TAPS and PHW sub-decree. The inspections revealed several issues, including the display of cigarette packs with various advertising stickers, outdated pictorial health warnings, and packs without a clear PHW. Other violations included promotions offering free lighters, advertising of prizes such as fans, fridges, and phones, and exchange offers where cigarette packs could be traded for cash. NCHP is now preparing letters and compiling evidence to be submitted to the courts in 25 provinces, including Phnom Penh, to seek enforcement actions against these tobacco industry violations.



Tobacco advertisements and promotions monitored at the point-of-sales

Indonesia: A high-level roundtable, involving senior officials from various ministries including Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Planning and Development, Ministry of Health, economists, and tobacco control advocates, recommended a 25% annual increase in tobacco excise taxes, simplification of tariff structures, and policy revisions to ensure the market transaction price matches the published retail price.

Cambodia: At the Youth Forum on Tobacco Tax Measures hosted by the Royal Academy of Cambodia, NCHP joined 350 participants, including students, monks, and representatives from various organizations and ministries, to discuss increasing tobacco taxes. The forum supported raising taxes, with the Ministry of Health is planning to increase tax to 41%-47% by 2026 and considering a shift from Ad-Valorem to a Mixed Method. The Ministry of Economy and Finance is exploring similar measures. The Royal Academy endorsed higher taxes to reduce health impacts, and World Health Organization WHO recommended a 75% tax on retail prices. Cambodia Movement for Health highlighted successful tax increases in Thailand, predicting that a 15% price rise could cut smoking rates and deaths while significantly boosting tax revenue. WHO advocates for further tax increases and enhanced tobacco control policies.



Delegates from Youth Forum on Tobacco Tax Measures



Council of Ministers approving a legislative amendment concerning AIFAESA, I.P

Timor-Leste: The Council of Ministers approved a legislative amendment clarifying Authority for Inspection of Economic, Sanitary and Food Activities (AIFAESA, I.P).s duties and assigning public health and food testing to Timor-Leste's new National Institute of Public Health, which will serve as the national reference laboratory. AIFAESA will focus on other inspection and surveillance roles. Additionally, the Council directed the Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs and the Minister of the Interior to form joint teams to combat tobacco smuggling and counterfeiting, ensuring public health protection, regulatory compliance, and proper tax collection.

Protecting Tobacco Control policies from Tobacco Industry interference

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Indonesia: Vital Strategies coordinated the sending of 154 letters to the Mayor of Surabaya, the President, the State Secretariat, and other key ministries and stakeholders, calling for the immediate ban of the World Tobacco Asia (WTA) event scheduled to be held in Surabaya. Following this, the Ministry of Trade held a meeting with stakeholders and civil society to gather feedback. The Ministry of Health firmly rejected the WTA, citing violations of Government Regulation No. 28 of 2024.

Timor-Leste: At From April to July 2024, the National Alliance for Tobacco Control held multiple meetings with the government, media, and civil society organizations to raise awareness about the threats posed by the tobacco industry to public health, agriculture, and other sectors. The campaign included policy discussions with government officials and parliament, press conferences, and meetings with civil society groups. These activities were conducted to counter the recent approaches from tobacco companies in China and Indonesia seeking to establish branches in Timor Leste.

From January to August 2024, ANCT ran a series of campaigns across municipalities aimed at educating youth about the health hazards of tobacco and the industry's marketing strategies designed to attract new users. The campaign also provided guidance on avoiding social factors that contribute to smoking. Over 700 youths participated in these activities.



Meetings conducted by ANCT with various stakeholders



Campaign to educate youths on tobacco's hazards and industry's marketing strategies

Nepal

- On July 16, 2024, Mr. Ananda Bahadur Chand, Chairman of Action Nepal, met with Nepal's newly appointed Health Minister, Mr. Pradip Poudel. During the meeting, Mr. Chand congratulated the minister on assuming office. They had an in-depth discussion on the public health challenges facing the country, with a particular focus on tobacco control. Mr. Chand emphasized the importance of implementing plain packaging for tobacco products. The Health Minister responded positively to these views and expressed his willingness to collaborate on this initiative in the near future.

Indonesia

- Vital Strategies' grantees Indonesia Institute of Social Development (IISD) and Rumah Mediasi Indonesia (RMI) released media statements that generated 48 articles in national and subnational media which emphasized the urgency to immediately sign the government regulation.

Philippines

- Vital Strategies held a series of meetings with key national government agencies, including the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Health (DOH), and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA). These discussions aimed to build stronger connections and explore opportunities for Vital Strategies to collaborate closely with these agencies, providing tailored technical assistance to support their efforts in reducing tobacco use and its related health impacts
- The Local Tobacco Control Council in Metropolitan Manila held its Quarter 2 Meeting on June 25, 2024, to discuss the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)'s implementation of Republic Act 11900 (Vape Regulation Law). The meeting was attended by Tobacco Control Program Coordinators and Enforcement Team Leaders from MM-LGUs, as well as representatives from partner agencies, including DOH-National Capital Region (NCR), Health Justice Phils, Social Watch Phils, Vital Strategies, and DTI. The participants agreed to begin joint operations in September, with further details to be discussed in the next meeting.
- To enhance the implementation of the Tobacco Control Program among the youth, Transcend-TICI, with grant support from Vital Strategies, organized a one-day consultation meeting with Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) presidents and representatives on July 17, 2024, at Hotel Veniz on Session Road, Baguio City. The meeting was attended by 20 participants

Timor-Leste

- In July, the National Alliance for Tobacco Control Timor-Leste presented a talk on tobacco control policy implementation, challenges, and future actions at an international scientific seminar held to commemorate National Health Day. ANCT shared survey findings on TAPS, smoke-free policies, the effectiveness of pictorial health warnings, enforcement issues, and the taxation system. The presentation highlighted the need for a national strategic plan for tobacco control, improved enforcement and fines, and better taxation policies. The seminar was attended by the Vice Minister of Health, general directors from various ministries, directors, media representatives, academic institutions, and civil society organizations.



Participants from the launching of the database on actors promoting harm reduction through the use of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products

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