

Tobacco Control Asia Pacific Bulletin

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Vice President, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and Vice Minister for Women Empowerment and Child Protection, Veronica Tan, with representatives from Vital Strategies and LPAI

Highlights

Indonesia’s Vice President Supports Stronger Tobacco Control Measures to Protect Children

Vital Strategies and the Indonesian Child Protection Agency (LPAI) met with Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka to present key policy recommendations to strengthen tobacco control and protect Indonesia’s youth. Attended by Vice Minister for Women Empowerment and Child Protection, Veronica Tan, who emphasized the urgent need for inter-ministerial collaboration to reduce smoking rates among young people and lessen the health and economic burden on low-income families.

The delegation presented four major recommendations: a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS); increased tobacco excise taxes; implementation of standardized packaging as per Government Regulation No. 28/2024; and stronger enforcement of smoke-free area (KTR) regulations. Vice President Gibran shared his experience implementing tobacco control policies during his time as Mayor of Solo and expressed strong support for national-level action. He stressed the importance of protecting children from secondhand smoke and harmful tobacco marketing.

Over 1,000 letters from children and a youth declaration were presented, reinforcing the call for urgent action. The Vice President responded positively and supported stronger regulation. As a result of the meeting, concrete follow-up steps were agreed upon, including coordinated efforts with key ministries, regular updates to the Vice President, and continued engagement through upcoming events such as the National Children’s Day celebration and the Indonesian Conference on Tobacco Control. The meeting highlighted growing political will and multi-sectoral commitment to advancing tobacco control for a healthier, tobacco-free generation.

Protecting people from tobacco smoke

Indonesia: The Deputy Minister of Villages participated in a national conference hosted by the Indonesian Health Offices Association (ADINKES), bringing together over 500 subnational health officials to emphasize the vital role of villages in disease prevention. The Deputy Minister underscored the need for village-led smoke-free efforts and launched new guidelines for using village funds to support smoke-free policy implementation. During the opening, Vital Strategies' Dr. Tara Singh Bam highlighted the links between tobacco use, tuberculosis, and stunting. A dedicated session with 80 participants featured Denpasar Health Office's best practices in advancing local smoke-free initiatives.



Opening ceremony of national conference hosted by ADINKES

- Throughout April and May, Vital Strategies engaged with seven newly appointed mayors and regents in Yogyakarta, Bogor, Padang, Pontianak, Denpasar, Kulon Progo, and Magelang to reinforce local leadership in advancing tobacco control. These meetings focused on sustaining momentum around smoke-free policies, bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS), and ensuring effective implementation at the city and district levels. With many leaders new to office, the discussions emphasized the importance of political commitment, continuity of public health programs, and safeguarding policies from tobacco industry interference. These engagements reflect a proactive approach to supporting leadership transitions while maintaining strong, community-driven tobacco control efforts to create healthier, tobacco-free cities.



Meeting with the Regent of Magelang



Meeting with Mayor of Pontianak City



Meeting with Mayor of Yogyakarta City



Coordination meeting with Kulon Progo Health Office



High-level meeting in Denpasar

On March 18, 2025, a high-level meeting in Denpasar brought together 67 participants—including the Deputy Mayor, Bali Provincial and Denpasar City Health Offices, Civil Police, and the Denpasar City Regional Children's Forum (FAD)—to advance local tobacco control. Organized by Vital Strategies grantee Udayana Central, the meeting aimed to strengthen the implementation of Smoke-Free Areas (KTR), enforce outdoor cigarette advertising bans, and expand access to cessation services, particularly for youth. The FAD presented a youth declaration urging stronger protections, which was fully endorsed by the Deputy Mayor. The meeting concluded with action plans from each agency, outlining steps for regular coordination, task force meetings, and public education to support Denpasar's commitment to becoming a Healthy and Child-Friendly City.

- Indonesia Society for Health Promotion and Educators (PPKMI), held a workshop for 45 participants from health offices, legal departments, and universities across seven cities to strengthen implementation of smoke-free university policies. Speakers from the Central Java Provincial Health Office, Provincial Secretariat, and Semarang City Health Office shared insights to build local capacity and promote healthier academic environments.
- Vital Strategies partner Yasin Jayapura supported Asmat Regency in South Papua in adopting smoke-free policies that ban smoking in public places, workplaces, and public transport, marking a significant step toward protecting community health.
- In Makassar, 20 smoke-free coordinators from the health office and local police were trained to enhance policy enforcement, with random inspections showing 360 out of 398 venues in compliance. In Pontianak, 50 smoke-free coordinators from various agencies were also trained to strengthen multi-sectoral implementation efforts.
- **Nepal:** Action Nepal has been actively engaging with mayors across the country to secure their commitment to advancing tobacco control within their jurisdictions. These meetings provide a platform to discuss strategies for creating smoke-free environments and strengthening local policy enforcement. As a result, over 35 mayors from metropolitan, municipal, and rural areas are now formally part of a growing alliance dedicated to sustainable tobacco control.

As part of its Smoke-Free Campaign, Action Nepal visited Purbakhola Rural Municipality in Palpa to conduct a comprehensive training for local health workers on tobacco control and promoting smoke-free environments. The team also carried out a compliance survey to assess the implementation of existing smoke-free policies and identify areas for improvement. Previously, the municipality had made 11 smoke-free declarations, reaffirming its commitment to public health. These declarations were made in the presence of the Mayor, the Chair of Action Nepal, and other key stakeholders, underscoring strong local leadership for a smoke-free community.



11 smoke-free declarations being signed in Purbakhola

- **Philippines:** The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) supported the Municipality of Pateros in passing an amended Smoke-Free and Vape-Free Environment Ordinance, expanding coverage to include vapor products, strengthening enforcement measures, and updating restrictions on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS).



Smoke-free enforcer putting “No Smoking” signage at a local shop in Tuba

The Municipal Health Service Office (MHSO) – Tuba, in collaboration with Transcend-TICI, conducted a compliance monitoring activity in Poblacion, Tuba, alongside deputized enforcers from the Asin Cluster. The activity highlighted improved adherence to local smoke-free ordinances and underscored the need to address single-stick cigarette sales and tobacco use linked to momma. In addition to enforcement, the team led IEC efforts, distributing flyers and signages while engaging the community to raise awareness and promote a smoke-free Tuba.

Vietnam: On March 27, Vital Strategies grantee, the Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP), conducted a training in Hanoi for 15 local NGOs on integrating smoke-free environments (SFE) and tobacco control into their organizational work. Following the workshop, 22 organizations from the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Network committed to developing their own smoke-free policies, with CCIHP providing ongoing support and monitoring.



CCIHP workshop in Hanoi

Offering help to quit tobacco use

- **Cambodia:** The National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP) has revised its smoking cessation guidelines for tuberculosis (TB) patients to better align with the national TB program and TB patient cards. A coordination meeting with CENAT is planned for May to support the integration of cessation services into routine TB care.
- NCHP is also updating the 115 cessation hotline system with new scripts and voice messages. NCHP will seek approval from the Minister of Health to officially establish the hotline in May 2025.



Framework Planning Workshop for cessation services

Philippines: Vital Strategies, in partnership with the Ateneo School of Government (ASOG), held a Framework Planning Workshop to support the development of the National Tobacco Cessation Infrastructure Plan. Attended by 17 participants from key health agencies and institutions, the workshop aligned priorities, reviewed current strategies, and mapped stakeholders to guide the next phases of planning and implementation.

Warning about the dangers of tobacco

- **Indonesia:** Indonesian Child Protection Agency (LPAI), held its third public dialogue to raise awareness and build public support for the Ministry of Health's policy on standardized tobacco packaging. The event was attended by 62 participants and emphasized the importance of protecting children from harmful tobacco marketing.

Cambodia: NCHP joined a task force meeting at the Council of Ministers to finalize the penalty section of the draft sub-decree on 90% pictorial health warnings (PHW). The Ministry of Justice proposed replacing monetary fines with administrative sanctions, while the Ministry of Health (MOH) working group recommended further dialogue to resolve the issue. The MOH continues to push for increasing PHW size from 55% to 90% by amending only one article of Sub-Decree No. 149 regarding the PHW.



Task force meeting for 90% PHW sub-decree



Discussion with NHEICC on 100% PHW implementation

Nepal: Action Nepal is regularly engaging with key stakeholders and National Health Education, Information and Communication Center (NHEICC), Ministry of Health and Population officials to support the effective implementation of 100% PHW on tobacco products. In addition to ensuring full coverage, efforts are underway to coordinate the timely rotation of warning images in line with regulatory requirements.

Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship

Cambodia: NCHP conducted monitoring visits in Takeo, Kep, Pailin, and Battambang provinces to assess compliance with the TAPS ban. Common violations included oversized advertising, excessive product displays, multiple packs of the same brand at points of sale, and the use of multiple cabinets—most of which were provided by the tobacco industry.



Monitoring visit on TAPS ban



Smoke-free task force with removed Tobacco ads

Philippines: The Itogon Smoke-Free Task Force, led by the MHSO and Transcend-TICI, conducted compliance monitoring and IEC activities to raise public awareness of Municipal Ordinance No. 35, s.2020. The team removed tobacco advertisements from local stores, installed No Smoking/Vaping signages, and engaged the community to strengthen ordinance compliance. Transcend documented 21 establishments in Itogon, Benguet for violations of tobacco advertising and promotion restrictions, and referred to local enforcement for follow-up action.

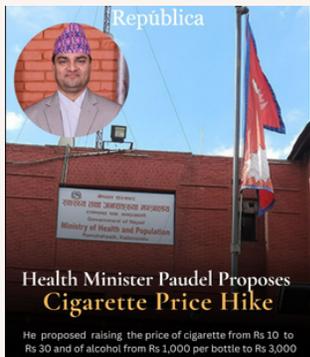


Tobacco ads banners removed from one of the shops in Itogon

- MMDA personnel conducted inspections around 156 schools and 35 public transportation terminals across the region to monitor compliance with tobacco control policies. A total of 2,377 violations were identified and subsequently reported to the respective LGUs.

Raising taxes on tobacco

- **Indonesia:** The Ministry of Health and Ahmad Dahlan University held an online discussion to gather technical input for the implementation guidelines of the Tobacco Excise Revenue Sharing Fund (DBHCHT). The session was attended by 30 civil society participants and focused on ensuring the fund is effectively used to support tobacco control efforts.



News on the Health Minister proposing price increase on cigarettes and alcohol

Nepal: Action Nepal has been consistently engaging with key government bodies, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, and members of the Tax Recommendation Committee, to advocate for a tobacco tax increase in the upcoming budget. These discussions emphasize the public health benefits of higher tobacco taxation and aim to influence policy decisions that contribute to reducing tobacco use and protecting population health.

Tobacco industry interferences

- **Indonesia:** In Kulon Progo, Vital Strategies coordinated a joint letter from 11 organizations in support of maintaining strong smoke-free regulations, following petitions submitted by tobacco industry front groups and unions calling for revisions to the existing policy. Simultaneously, 12 youth organizations under the Forum of Youth Organizations Caring for Areas Without Tobacco united to support the newly inaugurated Regent, Dr. Agung, urging continued enforcement of Smoke-Free Law No. 5 of 2014 to protect over 411,000 residents from tobacco smoke exposure. The youth submitted a formal letter to the Regent and the Chairman of the District Parliament opposing any allowance for tobacco advertising, promotion, or sponsorship. They also engaged in a dialogue with Muhammadiyah Kulon Progo, a key Islamic organization that reaffirmed its support for the law's full implementation, aligning with its long-standing stance on tobacco prohibition.
- **Cambodia:** The tobacco industry (TI) in Cambodia requested access to the draft sub-decree on 90% pictorial health warnings (PHW), but the Ministry of Health (MOH) declined both the request and any input from the industry. In response, the TI has continued lobbying the Prime Minister to delay the sub-decree. Meanwhile, the MOH, supported by relevant ministries continues to advance the proposal, with preparations underway to implement 90% PHW coverage.

Nepal: Action Nepal successfully led a sustained advocacy campaign to remove tobacco industry influence from the Nepal Literature Festival, which had previously been sponsored by Surya Nepal. Through strategic media outreach, social media activism, and engagement with government officials, festival participants, and organizers, the campaign pressured organizers to cut ties with the tobacco company. As a result, for the first time, Surya Nepal was not involved in any form of sponsorship at this year’s festival—despite initially being listed. This marks a significant public health victory and a step toward keeping cultural platforms free from tobacco industry interference.



Advocacy campaign led to withdrawal of tobacco industry from literature festival

- **Philippines:** In Vital Strategies supported local partners in raising concerns over violations of the vape law linked to the IQOS Iluma x Steve Aoki concert, where unauthorized promotions of heated tobacco products were reported. Following these efforts and mounting public pressure, regulatory authorities took action, and the Department of Trade and Industry imposed a ₱100,000 (~ USD 1,800) fine on Philip Morris International (PMFTC) for promoting IQOS Iluma in violation of the vape law.

General Tobacco Control



Delegates from the Second Summit of the Timor-Leste Mayors Alliance for Health and Development

Timor-Leste: The Second Summit of the Timor-Leste Mayors Alliance for Health and Development, held on March 23, 2025, in Dili, marked a milestone in the country’s public health progress. The alliance expanded from five to nine mayors, who, along with the Ministry of Health and media representatives, reinforced their commitment to tobacco control. Key resolutions included a ban on smoking and vaping in public areas, restrictions on tobacco advertising and sales to minors, integration of cessation programs into TB control, and support for higher tobacco taxes. The summit showcased unified leadership and renewed dedication to measurable health and development goals across Timor-Leste.

Indonesia: The Center for Islamic Economics and Business, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Indonesia, hosted a policy dialogue on March 17, 2025, in Jakarta to advance tobacco control strategies within the RPJMN 2025–2029. The event gathered key ministries and institutions to discuss reducing smoking prevalence—especially among youth aged 10–21—through stronger smoke-free regulations, higher tobacco taxes, simplified tax structures, and stricter advertising controls. The dialogue emphasized the need for multi-sectoral collaboration to address the health, economic, and social impacts of tobacco use in Indonesia.



Policy Dialogue on Tobacco Control in Indonesia's National Development Plan 2025-2029

- On May 5, 2025, the Indonesian Child Protection Agency (LPAI) met with the Ministry of Industry's Agency for Standardization and Industrial Services Policy (BSKJI) to follow up on Government Regulation No. 28/2024, focusing on protecting children from tobacco marketing tactics. LPAI conveyed youth-driven recommendations, including the implementation of standardized packaging, a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising and promotion, and higher tobacco prices to limit youth access. BSKJI welcomed the input and confirmed it would be reviewed and forwarded to the Minister of Industry and the Directorate of Agro-Industry. LPAI will seek continued engagement at the leadership level to advance regulatory action.

Asia Pacific regional webinar on TB and Tobacco

Vital Strategies, together with MOH, ADINKES and other partners, held a regional webinar titled “TB and Tobacco: A Preventable Tragedy” with over 500 participants from national and subnational TB and tobacco control sectors, including the Ministry of Health’s Communicable and Noncommunicable Disease Directorates. The discussion emphasized the urgent need to integrate smoking cessation into TB programs and reinforced cross-directorate commitment to strengthen policy advocacy on TB and tobacco control.

- Muhammadiyah Student Association held a tobacco control workshop for 11 journalists, featuring the Director of Noncommunicable Diseases from the Ministry of Health. The session highlighted the media's role in supporting tobacco control efforts and promoting public awareness through accurate, evidence-based reporting.

Philippines: With technical support from Vital Strategies, the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) officially endorsed the Index for Tobacco Control Sustainability-Philippines (ITCS-PH) to the Department of Health and the Department of Interior and Local Government. Attended by 75 participants from Metro Manila Local Government Units (LGUs) and partner agencies, the event showcased pilot test results and emphasized the tool's value in supporting regular validation and helping LGUs identify and address policy and implementation gaps in tobacco control.



Endorsement of the Index for Tobacco Control Sustainability-Philippines (ITCS-PH) to key stakeholders



Mayor of Pasig receiving the award for city's TC sustainability

On March 24, 2025, Pasig City received an award for achieving a sustainable level in its Tobacco Control Program, as assessed by the localized Index of Tobacco Control Sustainability-Philippines (ITCS-Ph). The award was presented during the city's flag-raising ceremony, attended by the Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Councilors, and department heads. This recognition highlights Pasig's strong compliance and ongoing efforts in tobacco control, reinforcing its leadership and serving as a model for other LGUs to follow.

On March 28, 2025, Vital Strategies trained seven co-grantee organizations on using the ITCS-Ph tool to assess and strengthen tobacco control efforts in their LGUs. This training led to the integration of ITCS-Ph validation activities into each group's workplan to strengthen local monitoring and program improvement.



Training co-grantees on usage of ITCS-Ph tool

- **Vietnam:** On March 28, STOP grantee the Center for Environmental Protection and Response to Climate Change (CEPVN) hosted a seminar on the environmental and climate impacts of the tobacco industry in Vietnam. The event was attended by over 40 delegates from government, academia, and NGOs, highlighting the industry's harmful supply chain practices and misleading sustainability narratives. Participants advocated for increased tobacco taxation and stronger accountability for environmental and health harms. The seminar was covered in local media.



Compliance monitoring activity and installation of No Smoking/Vaping signages in Itogon

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