

Tobacco Control Asia Pacific Monthly Bulletin

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Highlights

Cambodia Strengthens Tobacco Control with Comprehensive Ban on E-cigarettes and HTPs

Phnom Penh, 21 October 2025: The Royal Government of Cambodia has issued a sweeping directive banning the import, sale, advertising, use, possession, and production of all electronic smoking devices, including e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, and shisha, to protect public health and address rising youth use. The measure supports national goals for human capital development and responds to concerns that these products fuel nicotine addiction and increase non-communicable diseases.



Sample “E-cigarettes prohibited” signage

Cambodia has progressively tightened regulations, beginning with bans on shisha and e-cigarettes in 2014 and extending to heated tobacco products in 2021. In June 2025, investment in these products was prohibited. The new directive, signed by Prime Minister Hun Manet, consolidates and expands these measures with stricter enforcement across ministries and subnational authorities.

Key ministries are tasked with preventing their entry, trade, and promotion, while the Ministry of Health will lead nationwide awareness efforts on associated health risks. The Ministry of Education will enforce bans in and around all educational and youth facilities. All government bodies must act to prevent and control related activities, and civil servants, police, and military personnel are strictly prohibited from using such products. Individuals found using or possessing them will receive warnings and confiscation, with repeat offenders required to sign formal commitments. Businesses involved in importing, selling, or promoting these products will face license suspension or revocation. The policy was developed through strong inter-ministerial collaboration led by the National Committee for School Health, with technical leadership from the Ministry of Health and coordination from the National Center for Health Promotion.

Since 2013, Vital Strategies has partnered with Cambodia's Ministry of Health to advance tobacco control, supporting key milestones such as the Tobacco Control Law, 55% pictorial health warnings, and sub-decrees on smoke-free environments and TAPS bans. It also supported the formation of the Subnational Government Alliance for Tobacco Control in 2017 and supported bans on e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products. Vital Strategies continues to provide technical and financial assistance to strengthen legislation, expand smoke-free areas, increase taxation, counter industry interference, and scale up cessation services, including integrating cessation into primary care and developing Cambodia's first Quitline.

Protecting people from tobacco smoke

Indonesia: As of November 2025, 385 out of 514 cities and districts have adopted local smoke-free regulations - an increase from 370 in 2024 - now covering over 85% of the population (285,721,236 people). In addition, 40 cities/districts have implemented outdoor tobacco advertising bans, 34 have prohibited point-of-sale tobacco product displays, and 86 have banned e-cigarette use in smoke-free areas. Enforcement programs have also been implemented in six cities, resulting in high levels of compliance.

Muhammadiyah Tobacco Control Center UNIMMA, in collaboration with the Magelang City Health Office, launched the Smoke-Free implementation initiative, led by the Mayor and Vice Mayor of Magelang City. The kickoff activities included installing smoke-free signages on public transportation and in 28 local government departments. Mayor Damar Prasetyana reaffirmed his strong commitment to advancing smoke-free policies in his remarks.



Mayor of Magelang City installing smoke-free signages on public transport vehicle



Installation of no smoking signages in Denpasar

Vital Strategies grantee Udayana Central supported Denpasar City in scaling up its no-smoking campaign by installing additional signage across the city to raise public awareness and support stronger compliance with smoke-free regulations. To date, installed over 5500 no smoking signages have been placed in 1,182 public places, workplaces, and public transport, reinforcing the city's commitment to creating a healthier, smoke-free environment for residents and visitors.

A Tobacco-Free Campus workshop trained students in advocacy, advancing efforts to integrate smoke-free policies into higher education. Following the training, advocacy with the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) has led to recognition of the Health Law as a legal basis for accreditation, and work is ongoing to include Smoke-Free Area (KTR) indicators in university accreditation forms. The next step is engagement with the Independent Accreditation Agency for Study Programs (LAM-PT).



Students from Tobacco-Free Campus workshop



Anti-smoking rally and public signature program at Old Dhaka

Bangladesh: On 20 September 2025, the Pratyasha Anti-Drug's Club and Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance (BATA) organized an anti-smoking rally and public signature program at the food warehouse jetty of the Buriganga River in Old Dhaka to demand stronger tobacco control laws and highlight the harmful effects of smoking. Around 500 participants, including local residents, students, and launch and boat employees, joined the event. Participants signed a petition calling for stricter tobacco control measures, demonstrating broad public support.

Cambodia: Pailin Province was officially declared Cambodia's ninth Smoke-Free Tourism City on November 26, 2025, in a ceremony presided over by His Excellency Hout Hak, Minister of Tourism, and Dr. Mariana Trias, WHO Representative to Cambodia. With over 500 participants in attendance, the recognition highlights Pailin's efforts to maintain a smoke-free environment, strengthen urban infrastructure, and promote a healthier tourism destination.



Minister of Tourism awarded Smoke-Free Tourism Cities award to Governor of Pailin Province



Smoke- and Vape-Free Transport Network Vehicle Service campaign in Pasig City

Philippines: On November 14, 2025, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the Metro Manila Regional Tobacco Control Network, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Department of Transportation, launched the Smoke- and Vape-Free Transport Network Vehicle Service campaign in Pasig City, expanding smoke-free enforcement to all forms of transport, including rideshare vehicles, jeepneys, and tricycles. The event was attended by over 270 participants.

- Transcend and partners in the Cordillera Administrative Region continued providing enforcement support through multiple Smoke-Free Task Force meetings, community discussions, ordinance collection efforts, and on-the-ground technical assistance to municipal enforcement teams in Benguet, Baguio, and Tabuk.

Vital Strategies held a meeting with Lezo Municipal Officials and the Smoke-Free Lezo Task Force to strengthen tobacco control initiatives and support a healthier, smoke-free community. During the visit, the team documented local policy implementation experiences, engaged local government champions, assessed enforcer capacity, and learned from the municipality's best practices in smoke-free policy enforcement, community engagement, and public awareness campaigns, reflecting ongoing local leadership in promoting public health and wellness.



Vital Strategies' sub-national visit to Lezo, Aklan Province



Koronadal City's enforcement training

Data and Implementation Sciences for Health, Inc. (DISH) supported Koronadal City's smoke-free efforts by conducting an enforcement training for the City Health Office and City Environment and Natural Resources Office. Held on October 27–29, 2025, the workshop trained 31 participants to effectively implement the city's Anti-Smoking and Anti-Vaping Ordinance.

Transcend conducted Smoke-Free Home Consultations in Benguet and Baguio, refining the voluntary smoke-free home initiative and preparing for pilot implementation in La Trinidad, Tuba, and Baguio City.



Smoke-Free Home Consultations in Benguet and Baguio



Participants of storytelling training in the Cordillera

Transcend and its partners conducted a digital storytelling training in the Cordillera Administrative Region to develop audience-centered communication skills, strengthen community engagement, and support ongoing smoke-free advocacy.

Offering help to quit tobacco use

- **Indonesia:** Ministry of Health organized a meeting with the Non-communicable and Tuberculosis departments to discuss the integration of smoking cessation in Tuberculosis program. Vital Strategies provided technical support and strategic guidance.
- **Philippines:** The Ateneo School of Government (ASOG), in partnership with the Department of Health's Disease Prevention and Control Bureau, advanced work on developing a standalone PhilHealth benefit package for tobacco cessation, conducting technical meetings to refine service pathways, costing, and alignment with the Universal Health Care Law.

Warning about the dangers of tobacco

- **Bangladesh:** Association for the Prevention of Drug Abuse (MANAS) regularly monitors films in theaters and submits reports to the Bangladesh Film Certification Board as part of its efforts to implement the Tobacco Control law in entertainment media, highlighting compliance gaps and recommending corrective actions. As a result, anti-tobacco messages are now more prominently displayed in cinemas, and smoking scenes in films have significantly decreased, demonstrating the impact of monitoring and advocacy on public health.
- **Philippines:** The Ateneo School of Government, the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA), Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Philippines and Vital Strategies met to reassess the political landscape for reviving the Standardized Packaging Bill and to align their technical positions and advocacy strategies.

Nepal: Vital Strategies' grantee, Action Nepal met with the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Population to discuss updates on the Supreme Court case for implementing 100% pictorial health warnings on tobacco packaging. The Under Secretary provided an overview of current legal proceedings amid the recent political crisis, and the discussion covered legal pathways, stakeholder coordination, and steps to strengthen government enforcement of the 100% PHW directive.



Meeting with Under Secretary Mr. Gopi Krishna Regmi, Ministry of Health and Population



Director of Action Nepal discussing implementation challenges, effectiveness and way forward of 100% PHW

Action Nepal, organized a media interaction highlighting Nepal's progress toward 100% pictorial health warnings. Journalists, MoHP officials, and civil society representatives discussed implementation challenges, including political instability and potential industry interference. The program underscored the media's crucial role in exposing industry tactics, raising public awareness, and promoting transparency to ensure effective enforcement of the 100% PHW policy and protect public health.

Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship

Indonesia: Youth and community organizations in Kulon Progo organized a long march and met with the Kulon Progo Parliament to advocate for maintaining the district's Total TAPS Ban and Point-of-Sale display ban, as Regional Regulation No. 5/2014 on the smoke-free law is currently under revision.



Youth protested for total TAPS ban in Kulon Progo

- **Philippines:** The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) inspected 159 schools and 29 transport terminals, documenting 2,021 violations related to tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS), sales, and signage, and endorsed these to local government units for enforcement action.



Experience sharing meeting on implementation of Tobacco Control Local Guidelines

Bangladesh: AID Foundation and BATA held a meeting on the “Success and Challenges of Implementing Guidelines for Tobacco Control in Local Government Institutions”. Although local government law requires a license for tobacco and cigarette sales, only 4,155 licenses have been issued across 43 municipalities. With most of the estimated 150,000 sellers remaining unlicensed, illegal sales and tax evasion persist. Expanding licensing could boost government revenue and enhance enforcement of the Tobacco Control and Consumer Rights Acts.

Raising taxes on tobacco

- Indonesia:** The Ministry of Health of Indonesia has endorsed a new Guideline on the Use of Tobacco Excise Revenue Sharing Funds (DBH CHT). On 30 November, the Secretary General issued a letter to all cities and districts on its implementation. The guideline requires that 40% of DBH CHT allocations be prioritized for health programs, focusing on tobacco control through campaigns, smoke-free areas, cessation initiatives, tobacco consumption surveys, and regulation of advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products and e-cigarettes. Vital Strategies provided technical support to draft the technical guidelines for the use of tobacco excise revenue sharing funds (DBH CHT).

Nepal: On 5 and 7 September 2025, the National Health Education Information and Communication Center (NHEICC), with support from Vital Strategies, held interactive sessions with media and stakeholders on the importance of higher tobacco taxes. Discussions emphasized that stronger enforcement, larger health warnings, and effective regulation must be complemented by tax increases, which is the most effective tools to reduce tobacco use and aimed to build public and media support to encourage the Ministry of Finance to adopt a sustained annual 20% tax increase.



A representative from Nepal Development Research Institute delivering a presentation on Taxation

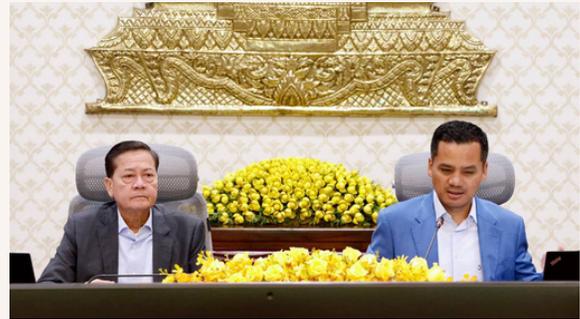
Novel tobacco and nicotine products



Meeting with the Minister of Trade

Indonesia: Vital Strategies' grantees Ahmad Dahlan University and the Indonesian Public Health Experts Association, met with the Minister of Trade to follow up on technical documents supporting a ban on single-stick cigarettes and electronic cigarette sales, aiming to strengthen regulations that protect youth from nicotine addiction. Government Regulation No. 28/2024 mandates.

Cambodia: The meeting to disseminate Royal Government Order No. 02 was co-chaired by His Excellency Dr. Sok Soken, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, and His Excellency Dr. Neth Savoeun, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Anti-Drug Authority. The session focused on the Order's ban on importing, distributing, selling, advertising, using, possessing, producing, and storing electronic and heated tobacco products for smuggling.



H.E. Dr. Neth Savoeun and H.E. Dr. Sok Soken at the meeting to disseminate Royal Government Order No. 02

- The Ministry of Tourism instructed that, under Royal Government policies, smoking and e-cigarette use are strictly prohibited in tourism areas, including hotels, restaurants, and public sites. Tourism service providers are required to enforce the ban, display clear signage, and educate visitors, while local authorities and inspectors will monitor compliance, with violations subject to legal penalties. This measure aims to promote smoke-free environments and improve the quality of tourism services.

Protection of public health policies from tobacco industry interferences

- **Indonesia:** On 14 November 2025, a technical discussion was held with the Secretary-General's team of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology to finalize the draft amendment of policy No. 64/2015 to include Code of Conduct for MOE officials. The draft amendment is being reviewed by internally.
- **Bangladesh:** All Upazila Parishads in Jhenaidah have been instructed to implement Article 5.3 and ban tobacco sales within 100 meters of schools and health facilities. On 6 October 2025, AID Foundation and Padma Social Welfare Organization met with the Additional District Magistrate, who confirmed that implementation and monitoring of the Local Government Institution Guidelines for Tobacco Control are underway across the district.

Alternative livelihood for tobacco farmers



Participants of workshop for young farmers and their families

Indonesia: Vital Strategies grantee University of Magelang's Muhammadiyah Tobacco Control Centre held its 7th workshop for 80 young farmers and children of farmers from Temanggung and Magelang. The session focused on livelihood diversification, transitioning from tobacco to alternative crops, raising awareness of tobacco industry tactics, and empowering participants to drive policy change. In collaboration with subnational Plantation and Agriculture Offices, the program has trained over 677 young farmers to date.

General Tobacco Control

Indonesia: A Tobacco-Free School initiative independently organized by teachers trained by the Muhammadiyah Student Association (TC IPM), delivering 1,141 letters to the President and 770 online petition signatures during the 2025 National Health Day commemoration, urging higher tobacco taxes and prices, a comprehensive ban on all tobacco and e-cigarette advertising, promotion, and sponsorship, implementation of standard packaging with 50% pictorial health warnings, and ratification of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).



Students signing petitions for comprehensive tobacco control measures

- **Bangladesh:** On 7 September 2025, a delegation from MANAS met with the leadership of the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (BADAS) and the Bangladesh Institute of Research and Rehabilitation in Diabetes, Endocrine and Metabolic Disorders (BIRDEM), to seek their support for strengthening the tobacco control law. Following the meeting, BADAS sent a letter to the Advisers of the Health, Finance, and Commerce Ministries urging swift action, signed by the association's leadership and hundreds of physicians.
- On 15 September 2025, a roadshow was held to raise awareness about the Tobacco Control Act, with technical support from the AID Foundation. The activities are part of ongoing efforts to implement the Local Government Institution Guidelines in Singra Municipality and Upazila of Natore.

- Throughout October 2025, municipalities across the country, using their own budgets and initiatives, conducted awareness campaigns to strengthen tobacco control laws, with technical support from AID Foundation. Activities included installing no-smoking signage, distributing leaflets, and running sticker campaigns at municipal offices and on public transport. On National No Tobacco Day (9 October 2025), 12 municipalities organized similar awareness programs, including a children’s drawing competition in Habiganj Municipality.



Sticker campaigns on various public transport vehicles



Children’s drawing competition in Habiganj Municipality



Observation of POS in Singra Municipality

Between 14 and 20 October 2025, AID Foundation held meetings with municipal officials in Cox's Bazar, Rajshahi, and Singra to strengthen tobacco control guideline implementation. In Cox's Bazar, steps were planned to ensure full district-wide implementation, with an experience-sharing meeting for municipal administrators and program officers later in the month. In Rajshahi, AID Foundation, in collaboration with the local anti-tobacco organization, inspected tobacco shops and shared observations with city officials, who committed to taking appropriate action. In Singra, officials were instructed to increase licensing of tobacco product shops to 100%. Follow-up inspections found no advertising violations.

Nepal: Action Nepal met with the newly appointed Director of the National Health Education, Information and Communication Centre (NHEICC), to discuss the current status and implementation challenges of tobacco control laws in Nepal. The discussion explored potential areas of collaboration, with both parties expressing a shared commitment to strengthening national tobacco control efforts. The director affirmed her willingness to work together on strategic communication, awareness campaigns, and policy support initiatives to advance effective tobacco control in the country.



Meeting with Dr. Radhika Thapaliya, Director, NHEICC

- Philippines:** In November 2025, Vital Strategies' Tobacco Control Division conducted subnational visits to Benguet and Baguio to strengthen coordination with local governments and communities on tobacco control. The delegation met with the Benguet Provincial Health Office, Baguio City Smoke-Free Task Force, Smoke-Free La Trinidad, and local leaders to review enforcement data trends, highlight promising practices, discuss challenges, and identify ways to support effective program implementation.



Tobacco Control Division's subnational visits to Benguet (Left) and Baguio (Right)

- Transcend supported the passage of a Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)–compliant ordinance in Rizal, Kalinga, and received recognition from the Cordillera Center for Health Development for its smoke-free program partnership in the region.
- The Ateneo School of Government reported that 16 of the 18 local government units (LGUs) in Iloilo Province participating in its Leadership and Governance in Tobacco Control (LGTC) Executive Course met all graduation requirements, with one LGU successfully passing a Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)–compliant ordinance.
- Timor-Leste:** The Ermera and Manufahi Municipal Authorities, together with the President Alliance of Health and Development Authorities (APAS), the Municipal Health Services, and the National Alliance for Tobacco Control–Timor-Leste (ANCT-TL), held workshops to disseminate municipal circulars and strengthen the implementation of Decree-Law No. 14/2016 on tobacco control. The sessions enhanced understanding of smoke-free and TAPS regulations, including bans on smoking in public places, tobacco advertising, single-stick sales, and industry contributions. Following the workshops, authorities installed “No Smoking,” “No Sale of Single Cigarettes,” and “Tobacco Promotion Prohibited” signs across public areas, schools, markets, and transport hubs to improve compliance and reinforce smoke-free environments.



Workshops to disseminate municipal circulars and strengthen the implementation of Decree-Law No. 14/2016 on tobacco control in Ermera (Left) and Manufahi (Right) Municipalities



Magelang city smokefree implementation kick off with the Mayor

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