

# Tobacco Control Asia Pacific Monthly Bulletin

Issue 5 (September 2024)



Mock up designs of various standardised tobacco packs with 50% pictorial health warnings

## Highlights

### New Guidelines and Strategic Efforts for Implementation of Regulation No. 28 of 2024

In August, the Ministry of Health, Indonesia, held two meetings to implement Regulation No. 28 of 2024, drafting guidelines requiring 50% of tobacco and e-cigarette packaging to display health warnings and meet standardized packaging rules. Vital Strategies has provided technical and legal support for drafting regulations and engaging key stakeholders, including civil society, media, tobacco farmers, and youth, to build public backing for tobacco control. Vital Strategies has also supported to develop mock up of various tobacco product packaging in line with the new standardised packaging provisions and 50% pictorial health warning size (pictured above). The Minister of Health has agreed with the draft mockups. Recent meetings with the new Director of Non-Communicable Disease Prevention and two public hearings in September have focused on packaging, sales restrictions, and monitoring nicotine and tar levels, with continued assistance from Vital Strategies and partners.

**Nepal:** Action Nepal team conducted market monitoring at several locations in Kathmandu to assess compliance with tobacco control laws. During the inspection, the team observed several violations, including people smoking near hospital premises and some vendors discreetly selling loose cigarettes. In the Thamel market, a popular tourist area, stores were found selling imported cigarettes without pictorial health warnings (PHW) and statutory labels. However, all domestic cigarette packs comply with PHW requirements. These findings were later presented at a multistakeholder meeting organized by the National Health Education, Information and Communication Center (NHEICC), which operates under the Ministry of Health and Population to oversee health promotion activities in Nepal.



Illicit cigarette packs at Thamel market



Vendors discreetly selling loose cigarettes



Multistakeholder meeting organized by NHEICC

## Protecting people from tobacco smoke

**Indonesia:** Three jurisdictions - **Temanggung, Pekalongan, and Kenda** - have implemented comprehensive smokefree policies that ban smoking in all public places, workplaces, and public transport, thereby protecting approximately 3.5 million people.

Similarly, **Pidie Jaya in Aceh Province** and **Ciamis in West Java Province** have implemented comprehensive smokefree policies, with Ciamis also implementing a ban on outdoor tobacco advertising and product displays at points of sale. In August and September, leaders and policymakers from 23 and 20 cities and districts respectively received technical support to develop and implement local tobacco control measures. By the end of September, 362 of Indonesia's 514 cities and districts had adopted 100% smokefree policies, protecting 212 million of the country's 266 million people.

**West Java Province:** The Acting Governor signed a circular mandating the implementation of smokefree laws in 26 districts, including a ban on outdoor tobacco advertising and product displays at points of sale.

**Special Region of Yogyakarta:** The Governor signed a circular to enforce smokefree policies in public spaces, workplaces, and transportation, with technical support provided by Vital Strategies.

**Central Java Province:** Vital Strategies, alongside the Ministries of Health and Home Affairs, met with five cities and districts (Pekalongan, Temanggung, Sukoharjo, Kendal, and Wonogiri) to advance smokefree policies.

In **Pontianak**, the Acting Mayor demonstrated strong commitment by leading a smokefree workshop and training 32 officials to form a smokefree task force. The Ministry of Health also conducted a monitoring visit, meeting with the task force and inspecting venues to evaluate policy enforcement.

In **Depok**, the city's smokefree task force, in collaboration with the Healthy City Forum, conducted 10 random inspections in hospitality and private office settings to ensure compliance with smokefree regulations.



Acting Mayor of Pontianak at the opening the Cross-Sector Workshop on the Implementation of Regulation No. 10

**Banda Aceh:** The Acting Mayor expressed support for smokefree policies during a high-level meeting, while a capacity-building workshop for health office heads and smokefree coordinators was held to enhance enforcement and maintain no-smoking signage.

**Makassar:** The Mayor signed a circular requiring strict adherence to smokefree regulations across public spaces and hospitality venues.

**Palembang:** At the ADINKES Annual Meeting, Palembang's Health Office shared its smokefree policy achievements. A workshop on September 10 trained 18 subdistrict and 42 health office heads. Of 250 inspected venues, 225 were found compliant with smokefree regulations.



Smokefree task force repainting one of the tobacco industry advertisements

**Philippines:** On August 9, 2024, the Kapangan Smoke-Free Task Force, with support from Transcend, developed the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for the Comprehensive Smoke-Free Ordinance (Municipal Ordinance 194 s. 202) in Kapangan, Benguet. The consultation meeting was attended by 18 participants.

On August 12, 2024, the Smoke-Free Aklan team visited Local Government Unit (LGU) Balete alongside the District medical officer IV and the Provincial Health Office Tobacco Control Coordinator. They warn store owners about penalties for violating the Smoke-Free Ordinance, especially TAPS bans. Violators were reported, and under police supervision, store owners removed tobacco industry billboards and repainted their spaces.

# Warning about the dangers of tobacco

**Cambodia:** National Centre for Health Promotion (NCHP) participated in a meeting at the Office of the Council of Ministers to advocate for increasing the size of pictorial health warnings (PHW) on tobacco products from 55% to 90%. The meeting, attended by 18 participants, resulted in unanimous support for the Ministry of Health's proposal to amend Sub-Decree No. 149 by preparing a new sub-decree for submission to the Prime Minister for signing. Participants also agreed to appoint the Inter-Ministerial Tobacco Control Committee (IMC) to facilitate this submission to the Prime Minister.

**Nepal:** Action Nepal organized a high-level discussion with the Minister of Health and Population on developing a roadmap for plain packaging policy (PPP) in Nepal. Participants included key officials from the Ministry of Health, Vital Strategies, and Action Nepal. The meeting was productive, with the minister recommending the creation of a roadmap and drafting of PPP for Nepal, which is now being finalized.



Key stakeholders from high level meeting on developing roadmap for PPP

## Enforcing tobacco advertising, promotion & sponsorship bans



Meeting with airport's management committee

**Indonesia:** Vital Strategies, along with its grantee, Hasanuddin University, provided technical support to Angkasa Pura Sultan Hasanuddin Airport for its Healthy Airport Program. The airport's management committee sought guidance from Vital to learn from Yogyakarta Airport's experience in banning tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.

**Indonesia:** Youth from the Muhammadiyah Student Association, met with the National Consumer Protection Agency to seek their support for policies aimed at banning tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.



Meeting with National Consumer Protection Agency

## Raising taxes on tobacco

**Indonesia:** The Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Planning and Development, and Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection convened a meeting to discuss the need for higher tobacco taxation. Key recommendations from the meeting included: 1) an annual 25% increase in tobacco excise and retail prices; 2) simplification of the excise structure for hand-rolled and machine-made cigarettes; and 3) revising the market transaction price to align with 100% of the published retail price.

Vital Strategies and its partners have undertaken various initiatives to advocate for a 25% tobacco tax increase and the simplification of tax tiers. These efforts include press conferences, letters, and an online petition. In total, 101 letters were sent to the President and Minister of Finance, 477 online petitions were submitted, and 31 media articles were published. A press conference was held to highlight the need for higher tobacco taxes to make cigarettes less affordable, resulting in widespread media coverage.



Tobacco and Alcohol Tax meeting in Phnom Penh

**Cambodia:** At a recent meeting on Tobacco and Alcohol Tax in Phnom Penh, participants from the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Health discussed strategies for enhancing tobacco control, utilizing the TaxSim Model to assess the impact of taxation policies. The Ministry is advocating for increased tobacco taxes, evidence suggests that raising cigarette prices to \$2 per pack could significantly reduce youth consumption. These initiatives reflect the Ministry's ongoing commitment to using taxation as a tool for public health improvement, supported through a grants program funded by Vital Strategies.

# Protecting Tobacco Control policies from Tobacco Industry interference

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Meeting with Honorable minister  
Mr. Badri Pandey

**Nepal:** Action Nepal, in collaboration with its media partners, successfully prevented Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation Mr. Badri Pandey and other media personnel from attending the Kalinga Literary Festival, which was sponsored by Surya Nepal, the country's largest tobacco manufacturer. Minister Pandey had been invited as the chief guest to inaugurate the event. However, Action Nepal strongly protested the tobacco industry's sponsorship and highlighted the legal and moral obligations of the minister and media to avoid participating. As a result, both the minister and media personnel canceled their attendance. Although the event proceeded, Action Nepal effectively advocated key figures to stop attending the event.

**Indonesia:** The Ministry of Trade held a meeting with the Ministry of Health, local government stakeholders, and tobacco control experts to gather feedback on the decision to cancel World Trade Asia in Surabaya.

Vital Strategies and its partners are leading a coordinated campaign to stop those events, scheduled for October in Surabaya. This campaign has involved press conferences, direct advocacy through letters, and a high-level meeting with the Ministry of Trade. Airlangga University organized a press conference to build ongoing support for the cancellation of both events, and efforts are underway to arrange a meeting with the Mayor of Surabaya. Additionally, a total of 27 organizations submitted 154 letters opposing the events, and the campaign has resulted in the publication of 18 media articles amplifying the rejection.

At the public hearings, industry groups, including Gappindo, voiced opposition to the draft regulations, particularly objecting to standardized packaging and excise tax increases. In response, counterarguments supported by evidence were presented, along with press conferences, letters, and a petition advocating for the regulations.

**Cambodia:** NCHP recently held a meeting with relevant Ministries to address recurring violations of tobacco industry regulations and develop effective enforcement measures for tobacco control laws. The meeting included 20 participants from various Ministries, such as Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Justice. Key outcomes included strengthening the capacity of tobacco inspectors from 25 provinces to issue fines to violators once regulations are in place, collaborating with the Ministry of Justice to pursue legal action against tobacco companies, increasing educational efforts with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and others, and intensifying measures to prevent online e-cigarette advertising while countering tobacco industry influence.



Meeting to address recurring violations of tobacco  
industry regulations

## Indonesia

- Vital Strategies held a meeting with the Director of Public Health & Nutrition at the Ministry of National Planning and Development (BAPPENAS) to discuss the inclusion of tobacco control provisions and strategies in the 2025-2029 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). BAPPENAS plans to begin drafting the RPJMN once the new administration takes office in October 2024.



Awareness-raising youth seminar

**Philippines:** On August 13, 2024, a youth seminar at the University of Manila focused on various health issues, including the tobacco and vaping epidemic. Approximately 200 community and out-of-school youth participated in the event. Tobacco control advocacy activities featured a lecture, a photo wall with message bubbles, and the production of video clips and social media cards.

- Vital Strategies, along with sub-grantee Transcend, participated with the Baguio City Smoke-Free Task Force in a ceremonial crushing of ₱6 million (~ USD 106,000) worth of confiscated vapes and cigarettes. The event sent a powerful message, particularly to the youth, reaffirming the city's commitment to protecting its citizens from the harmful effects of tobacco products.
- The Municipal Health Office of Tuba, in partnership with Transcend, conducted a one-day MPOWER and Deputization Training on July 23, 2024, at Ava Hall in Poblacion, Tuba, Benguet. The training covered key topics such as the Comprehensive Anti-Smoking Ordinance, the benefits of a tobacco-free community, WHO-FCTC and MPOWER guidelines, and the health risks associated with smoking, vaping, and betel quid chewing. The event was attended by 59 participants, including barangay officials, Philippine National Police, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) personnel, and municipal employees, received strong support from local officials.

**Timor-Leste:** In September 2024, the National Alliance for Tobacco Control in Timor-Leste (ANCT-TL) conducted a campaign in schools in Dili aimed at raising awareness among youths about the health hazards of tobacco and training them to recognize and resist tobacco industry marketing strategies designed to recruit new smokers. The campaign also focused on teaching them how to navigate social influences that may encourage smoking. Over 80 youths participated in this initiative.



Participants of school campaign in Dili



Youth seminar at the University of Manila to raise awareness about tobacco and vaping epidemic

For more information, please contact

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